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## **The Effectiveness of a District-Wide Training Initiative on Determining Preparedness of Educational Leaders in a Large, Southeastern Louisiana School System**

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The University of Southern Mississippi

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A DISTRICT-WIDE TRAINING INITIATIVE ON  
DETERMINING PREPAREDNESS OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN A  
LARGE, SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA SCHOOL SYSTEM

by

Jeanne Bordelon Wagner

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2012

ABSTRACT

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A nationwide shortage of qualified, experienced applicants to fill the roles of educational leaders has led to a hiring crisis among school districts across America. The diminishing pool of applicants, accompanied by a high turnover rate of practicing administrators and increasing accountability demands, has revealed the importance of recruitment and retention of educational leaders. As the roles of school administrators are constantly evolving and increasing in complexity, recruiting skillfully trained personnel proficient in all dimensions of school leadership is a catalyst for increasing student achievement and for reducing principal attrition rates. The purpose of this research was to reveal perceived levels of administrative preparedness by principals and assistant principals in a large southeastern Louisiana school system. This investigation intended to reveal whether educational leaders who participated in district training initiatives were better prepared to assume the roles of educational leaders than those who did not participate in district training initiatives. The results of this study, which indicate that participants in district-wide training initiatives experienced the same levels of administrative preparedness as non-participants, may be beneficial to school districts as provisions for educational leadership training programs are investigated and implemented.

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A Dissertation  
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December 2012

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, the late Larry J. Bordelon, who instilled in me the value of perseverance and hard work. Through his words of wisdom and selfless actions, he modeled unconditional love and represented everything I hope to become.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge the impact of my family’s contribution to this work. Their positive support and cheerful words of encouragement provided motivation and profoundly influenced the successful completion of this research project. My husband, Gary, the most patient man I know, has been my greatest source of strength. For his inspiration and devotion, I am blessed and will be forever indebted.

This body of work, which was once a distant, seemingly insurmountable idea, has come to fruition due to the earnest generosity of those individuals mentioned above.

Thank you!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Importance of the Study	
Conceptual Framework	
Research Questions	
Research Hypotheses	
Definition of Terms	
Delimitations	
Assumptions	
Justification	
Summary	
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....	15
Theoretical Foundations of Leadership Effectiveness	
Leadership Defined	
Principal Shortage	
Lack of Leadership Preparedness	
Leadership Preparation Programs	
District-Wide Leadership Preparation	
Summary	
III. METHODOLOGY .....	71
Overview	
Research Design	
Research Questions	
Research Hypotheses	
Participants	
Instrumentation	
Procedures	
Data Analysis	
Summary	



IV.	ANALYSIS OF DATA .....	79
	Demographic Data	
	Descriptive Statistics	
	Statistical Tests	
	Summary	
V.	DISCUSSION .....	94
	Summary	
	Summary of Procedures	
	Conclusions and Discussions	
	Limitations	
	Recommendations for Policy and Practice	
	Recommendations for Future Research	
	Summary	
	APPENDIXES .....	104
	REFERENCES .....	110

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

1.	Frequencies for Administrator Characteristics of Study Participants.....	82
2.	Frequencies for Years of Administrative Experience.....	84
3.	Frequencies of Participation in District Leadership Initiatives by Administrators .....	86
4.	Descriptive Statistics for Administrators' Levels of Administrative Preparedness (N=76) .....	88
5.	Descriptive Statistics for Levels of Administrative Preparedness across Domains and Attributes (N=76) .....	89
6.	Descriptive Statistics for Subgroups of Preparation Initiatives.....	91
7.	Descriptive Statistics for Levels of Administrative Preparedness across Domains in District-Trained versus Non-District Trained Administrators .....	94

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Importance of the Study

In an era of school reform and increased accountability, the effectiveness of a principal's role as instructional leader is being carefully scrutinized, and it is imperative that highly qualified, trained administrators are recruited and retained. Effective school leaders remaining in the field serve to assist schools in meeting state and district academic achievement mandates.

In the 1980s, a series of reports directed the nation's attention to a trend of declining school performance and the necessity for public school reform. Public perception of education weakened, and ill-prepared administrators were identified as the root cause of education's current state. Insufficient leadership training resulted in the poor management of public schools by novice and veteran administrators. Preparatory programs needed to be created, and those already in existence needed to be adjusted to meet the needs of potential and acting leaders. Pounder and Crow (2005) claim that university programs educate prospective administrators on current, research-based leadership theories but have not adequately equipped students with leadership skills necessary to effectively perform in the field of school administration. According to Owings, Kaplan, and Chappell (2011), "not all credentialed administrators may be well suited to the position" (p. 217). Completion of course work does not automatically imply readiness to assume a position in school leadership. Also, superintendents cite temperament and poor judgment as reasons licensed administrators are unemployed (Owings et al., 2011). In response to outcries of leadership preparation reform, the American Association of School Administrators reexamined current training practices

and identified leadership outcome goals required to educate professionals for successful school management, as follows:

1. Establish and maintains a positive and open learning environment to bring about the motivation and social integration of students and staff.
2. Build strong local, state, and national support for education.
3. Develop and deliver an effective curriculum that expands the definitions of literacy, competency, and cultural integration to include advanced technologies, problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills, and cultural enrichment for students.
4. Develop and implement effective models/modes of instructional delivery that make the best use of time, staff, advanced technologies, community resources, and financial means to maximize student outcomes.
5. Create programs of continuous improvement, including evaluation of both staff and program effectiveness as keys to student learning and development.
6. Skillfully manage school system operations and facilities to enhance student learning.
7. Conduct and make use of significant research as a basis for problem solving and program planning of all kinds. (Buckner & Jones, 1990, p. 8)

These guidelines and recommendations gained support of institutes of higher learning and provided a framework for early nationwide in-service programs (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1994).

## Conceptual Framework

### *Evolving Principal Roles*

With additional reform comes additional accountability as principals assume responsibility for the academic growth of their schools. Owings et al. (2011) comment on the lack of academic progress achieved by students attending schools with high principal attrition rates. They report, “this continual educator churn leaves high-poverty schools without the quality leadership, faculty, or academic climate needed to support learning for all students; and it contributes to these students achieving far below peers from low-poverty schools” (p. 215). Owings et al. (2011) describe a connection between principal and teacher attrition, claiming that even in low-performing schools, teachers remain in their positions due to their relationships with the principal.

The scope of educational leaders’ duties has expanded to include business management, coordinator, facilitator, and delegator. Consequently, principals are responsible for determining budget priorities, recruiting and evaluating staff, developing meaningful professional development opportunities, and critiquing instructional programs. Managerial expertise is required to operate facilities, maintain security, develop a crisis plan, and nurture school-community relations (Robbins & Alvy, 2009). Lazaridou (2009) purports that educational leadership training must focus on specialized skills for effectively negotiating interpersonal relationships and mastering political dynamics. To meet evolving expectations for school improvement, Lazaridou (2009) identifies the principal’s emerging roles as follows: initiating change via motivational techniques and professional development, managing and encouraging collaboration and shared decision- making, and communicating with outside sources to bridge the gap between

lesson content and real-life applications. Summarizing educational leaders' increased responsibility, Gorton, Alston, and Snowden (2007) note:

The public expects more from schools than ever before, including greater accountability; improved performance on standardized tests; guarantees of school safety; more input from parents; better school-community relations; and an acceptance and appreciation of diversity, with equal opportunities for all students. Concurrently, many political, educational, and religious leaders are looking for answers to education's challenges by pursuing alternative routes to excellence – privatization, home schooling, vouchers, charter schools, and various other efforts at reform. (p. xii)

Owings et al. (2011) describe the profound influence principals have in establishing the culture and instructional environment that, in turn, indirectly affects the standard of teaching and learning occurring in schools. Owings et al. comment,

The principal controls the most important factors affecting a school's teaching and instructional quality, including: attracting, selecting, and keeping outstanding teachers; their ability to identify and articulate school vision and goals; their effective allocation of resources; and their development of organizational structures to support instruction and learning. (p. 214)

Owings et al. (2011) also note the necessity for principals to be proficient in the areas of politics, security, public relations, finances, and technology. As roles of educational leaders evolve and expand, so must their knowledge and expertise in these areas which are critical to successful school operations.

### *Evolving Assistant Principal Roles*

While the duties of a principal have greatly expanded, the assistant principal's duties have also increased in complexity. Prior to reform movements of the recent decades, the assistant principal's role was often ambiguous and included clerical duties and routine tasks requiring no advanced training. Today's assistant principals are valued for their leadership knowledge and assertively engage in school-based management. They have emerged into instructional leaders capable of managing school operations alongside, or in the absence of, the principal. Assistant principals present a viable source of potential principals as the number of practicing principals approach retirement age. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (1994), 54.1% of principals in both private and public schools reported serving as assistant principals prior to promotion. That number increased to 62.1% in a 2003-2004 study, suggesting the assistant principalship as a possible precursor to the principalship.

### *Principal Shortage*

With administrators facing such high-stakes accountability pressure, along with increased duties and responsibilities of daily school operations, principals are leaving the profession in alarming numbers. In surveys conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (Battle, 2010), it is reported that 12% of the 117,400 private and public school principals during the 2007-2008 school year left their principal positions entirely. Furthermore, only 80% retained their current placements for the subsequent session, while 6% transferred to other schools. According to Battle (2010), "of principals who left the principalship in 2008-2009, a higher percentage of public school principals left due to retirement. Forty-five percent of public school principals and 22% of private school principals retired" (p. 3). Concurrently, assistant principals exit the profession at

escalating rates, with stress being a major cause. Marshall and Hooley (2006) state, “except for the superintendency, assistant principals have, arguably, the most unmanageable stress and unanswerable demands” (p. 45). Novice assistant principals, not having received advanced leadership training, lack coping strategies to balance or conquer stress derived from confrontation with students, parents, and teachers.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, as reported in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook, Edition 2010-2011*, anticipates excellent job opportunities for school administrators due to increasing retirement rates and fewer qualified applicants. However, potential administrators feel that increased wages will not compensate for greater accountability and adherence to arduous government regulations. Between 2008 and 2018, the number of available positions is expected to grow 8%, but the qualified applicant pool is not sufficient to fill vacancies.

Owings et al. (2011) reports, “warnings of a serious and pervasive shortage of school leaders and an impending leadership crisis in America’s public schools are accepted as fact” (p. 215). This shortage could potentially leave some schools without adequate administrative support for extended time periods. With the shrinking pool of applicants, accompanied by the increased rate of retirement, the degree of advanced training may contribute to administrators retaining the position, and research shows that student achievement is higher in schools where principals’ experience is a predictor of effectiveness. According to Fernandez et al. (2007) principal tenure on the job significantly affects performance on most indicators. They state, “principals in their first year on campus are much less effective than other principals. They have lower adjusted gains, lower accountability ratings, and higher teacher turnover” (p. 4). Rice (2010) recognized the positive impact on school performance in the areas of student attendance



and math achievement based on the principal's years of experience at a school.

Therefore, recruiting, training, and retaining qualified personnel are crucial to schools' continuous improvement efforts and students' academic growth.

### *Recruiting and Retaining Leaders*

As the result of an increasingly large percentage of education administrators predicted to retire during the next decade, combined with growing enrollment of school-age children, educational leadership has become a career in demand. Policy makers often engage in crisis recruitment in response to the personnel shortage experienced by existing leaders' retirement. The pool of qualified, credentialed applicants to fill vacant positions is scarce, and desperation sets in during the recruitment process. According to Marshall and Hooley (2006):

As a result, districts may recruit in crisis or emergency mode. In the absence of an adequate pool of applicants, districts may fast-track educators who may not want to make the transition to administration or who need more training before taking on the huge responsibilities of the assistant principal position. (p. 45)

The shortage of applicants to fill principal positions makes retaining current principals a top priority. In addition to retirement, other reasons principals leaving their jobs center around heavy workload and job complexity, long hours, high anxiety, increased accountability, and excessive paperwork. Designed to ease workload and keep principals in their jobs, programs such as job sharing were created, whereby the position is shared by two or more qualified administrators splitting duties, or by splitting the workday into shifts. Grubb and Flessa (2006) report the emergence of other alternative models to traditional principalship, such as rotating the principalship, and no principalship, in which case teachers share responsibility for completing leadership tasks. Chapman (2005)

claims that principals desire opportunities to expand on personal skills, network with other principals, and discuss change implementation; therefore, increased professional development is also identified as a possible method to keep principals in their jobs.

### *Leadership Preparation – University Programs*

Universities have traditionally relied upon plans of study requiring the completion of coursework as prerequisites for obtaining administrative certification. The pedagogical approaches to leadership training have been theory-based, rather than experience-based, leaving graduates to question their preparedness to assume leadership roles as new administrators. Robinson (2004) comments:

The completion of coursework does not guarantee that an individual pursuing an administrative position will be successful. Nor does learning educational theory ensure that the prospective assistant principal is competent to meet the challenges facing them in their first year as an administrator. (p. 5)

Administrators have experienced disappointment with the level and methods of realistic leadership preparation provided by universities in the past. Marshall and Hooley (2006) comment, “the most useful university experiences provide reality-based training and a safe environment for experimentation with decision-making” (p. 82). With assistance, candidates are directed to evaluate their personal leadership attributes by merging their abilities with theoretical teachings. Aside from enrollment in general administration courses, few opportunities exist for new administrators to gain formal leadership training. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2009) reported statistical data indicating a need for programs to identify prospective administrators who possessed leadership characteristics and skillfully train them to assume administrative roles in schools. NCES (2009) reports the existence of training programs for aspiring

administrators within 24% of districts consisting of more than one school during the 2007-2008 school year. Until the inception of district-wide leadership training initiatives in the past decade, experience obtained on the job has overwhelmingly been the main source of learning.

### *Leadership Preparation – Mentorship and Internship*

Mentoring is defined as “the willingness of an individual to offer guidance and supervision to another person in order to promote success in a chosen field” (Robinson, 2004, p. 52). Planning and decision-making regarding mentor programs should include a variety of participants. Collaborative efforts between prospective and veteran administrators, university personnel, and district personnel establish mutually beneficial mentor relationships. As part of the leadership preparation process, mentor relationships provide the aspiring assistant principal to gradually acclimate to the profession with the assistance of a supervisory principal with whom knowledge can be transferred and feedback exchanged. Butler (2008) describes a mentor-like principal leadership program called Side-by-Side Coaching offered at The New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz. On-the-job guidance is provided for new educational leaders by former principals, who are referred to as *coaches*. According to Gary Bloom (Butler, 2008), associate director of the center, “in addition to bringing a new perspective, coaches also are more likely to be confided in by new principals who might be reluctant to share problems with somebody inside the district out of fear of embarrassment or looking incompetent” (p. 68).

Mentors are assigned in conjunction with internships. Internships are available, enabling new and prospective administrators the opportunity to gain real-life experience through shadowing practicing administrators. Exposure to practical, hands-on

experiences is dependent upon principals' creativity in planning internship programs. Experiences may vary from one candidate to the next, as duties and responsibilities are limited. According to Marshall and Hooley (2006), "internship opportunities are hampered by the control issues of the principal who designs them. In the best cases, the interns substitute for assistant principals who are out of the building" (p. 83).

Participation in internship programs has been less than favorable in past studies. In a 1993-1994 study, NCES (1994) reports:

Thirty-nine percent of public school principals indicated that, prior to becoming a principal, they had participated in a district or school program for aspiring principals, 86% indicated that they had received in-service training in evaluation and supervision, 75% had received training in management techniques, and 41% had participated in an administrative internship aside from course work for a degree. (p. 4)

Upon examination of principal demographic characteristics, gender variations existed between participants in leadership preparation training. NCES (1994) notes the percentage of females (46%) participating in internship programs was greater than males (39%) (NCES, 1994). More recently (NCES, 2010), in *State standards and requirements for administrator licensure, by state 2009-2010*, NCES indicates all states having standards for licensure of school administrators, with 32 states providing supervised internships and 19 states requiring participation in mentoring or induction programs.

#### *Leadership Preparation – In-service and Induction*

Workshops or conferences are held affording opportunities for participation in skill-building exercises. These meetings, packed with activities to build leadership skills, address professional development needs of new and veteran administrators.

Administrators encounter replicated simulation exercises based on those experienced in the school setting. Marshall and Hooley (2006) state, “this kind of exercise requires candidates to integrate their formal course work in a way that helps them assess their own leadership abilities” (p. 83). Programs such as this sharpen the leadership skill set and refines administrative staff, preparing them to more effectively manage daily occurrences. In-services serve to reduce anxiety for candidates who are debating whether or not to pursue a career in educational administration.

#### Research Questions

- RQ1 To what degree does participation in the district’s leadership preparation initiatives determine preparedness of school administrators?
- RQ2 How does the level of preparedness compare between administrators who participated in district training initiatives versus administrators who did not participate in district training initiatives in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction?

#### Research Hypotheses

- H<sub>1</sub> No statistically significant association exists between administrators’ participation in leadership preparation training and leadership preparedness.
- H<sub>2</sub> No statistically significant association exists between administrators’ participation in district training initiatives compared to administrators not participating in district training initiatives in determining leadership preparedness in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction.

### Definition of Terms

*Administrator* – either a principal or assistant principal

*Assistant Principal* – a member of a principal’s administrative team, whose duties fall under the broad categories of curriculum and instruction, supervision, and discipline

*Credentialed* – status indicative of having followed a state-approved certification program through an institute of higher learning and earning licensure for their program of study

*High School* – A school providing academic services to students in grades 9–12.

*Leadership* – natural and learned ability, skill, and personal characteristics to conduct interpersonal relations that influence people to take desired actions

*Management* – mental and physical effort to coordinate diverse activities to achieve desired results; planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling

*Principal* – The school level administrator responsible for the instructional programs, business management, and day-to-day operations of the school

*Public School* – In the context of this study, schools established by the Louisiana Department of Education that are receiving public funding as supported by local, state, and federal taxes.

*Qualified* – individuals who have earned proper state credentials and exhibited qualities defined by high standards

### Delimitations

This study was based on the following delimitations:

1. The study was limited to public school principals and assistant principals in one school district, in the state of Louisiana.

2. The study was based on subjects' perceived level of preparedness obtained by participation in district-wide training initiatives.

#### Assumptions

The study was based on the following assumption:

1. Individual participants exhibited honesty and integrity when responding to research questions.

#### Justification

This study sought to examine the significance of leadership preparation initiatives by new administrators as indicators of leadership preparedness in a southeastern school district, in the state of Louisiana. The degree of preparation, as determined by administrators who participated in training programs versus administrators who did not participate in district training programs, was analyzed in this study. From the analysis of these results, the degree of relevancy provided insight as to how leadership preparation programs equip new administrators with knowledge and skills essential for job performance and promote the retention of effective educational leaders in the profession. The results of this study may be beneficial to school district leaders considering implementation of leadership preparation programs to train new administrators.

#### Summary

Increased accountability pressure, evolving leadership roles, heavy workloads, lack of prestige, and extreme time demands are causing educational leaders to leave the profession at an alarming speed. Heightened retirement rates, accompanied by a dwindling pool of qualified candidates, are causing a nation-wide principal shortage. In response to the declining applicant pool, school districts are seeking alternative methods for staffing administrative positions. Consequently, recruitment and retention efforts, as

well as district-wide training initiatives have emerged. The evaluation of such training programs will be essential in determining their effectiveness for preparing prospective administrators to meet relentless demands in educational settings.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

School systems across America are facing an administrative staffing deficiency. Principal certification requirements, responsibility shifts, imminent principal shortages, and leadership preparedness levels are problems commonly encountered as a growing number of school administrative vacancies remain unfilled. With increased accountability brought about by school reforms, leadership and management skills are vital to the successful operation of today's schools. However, leadership preparation programs have fallen short of adequately training prospective administrators to assume the role of effective school leaders. A decreasing pool of qualified applicants has caused school systems to engage in creative recruiting and training initiatives. District-wide alternatives to traditional leadership models focusing on *Grow Your Own* programs are surfacing nationwide as districts move to groom administrators from within, rather than depending upon outside sources.

#### Theoretical Foundations of Leadership Effectiveness

Effective school management is dependent upon the thoughtful and strategic actions of the organization's leaders. As administrative roles continue to evolve and increase in complexity, methods of leadership must also adapt to continuous change. The multifaceted job of school leadership has resulted in the development of theories and approaches influential in guiding educational leadership practices.

#### *Path-Goal Theory of Leadership*

The Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (Path-Goal) focuses on leadership behaviors supporting employee productivity and goal achievement. Path implies a means by which goals are attained. It concerns relationships between superiors and employees to

encompass productivity in daily functioning. It also addresses how superiors affect employee job satisfaction. Leaders assist employees in attaining goals by making the path easier to follow, resulting in increased productivity. Leaders motivate and encourage task completion by clearly defining goals, clarifying the path, removing obstacles, and incorporating incentives. According to House (1971), actions indicative of Path-Goal include offering support and guidance, providing feedback, decreasing role ambiguity, and setting high standards. Five classes of leader behaviors are associated with path-goal leadership: (a) directive path-goal behavior; (b) clarifying leader behavior; (c) supportive leader behavior; (d) participative leader behavior; and (e) achievement-oriented leader behavior. House and Mitchell (1974) added:

Leader behavior is acceptable and satisfying to subordinates to the extent that the subordinates see such behavior as either an immediate source of satisfaction or instrumental to future satisfaction. (p. 84)

Leader behavior is motivational, i.e., increases effort, to the extent that (a) such behavior makes satisfaction of subordinates' needs contingent on effective performance and (b) such behavior complements the environment of subordinates by providing coaching, guidance, support and rewards necessary for effective performance. (p. 84)

### *Transformational Leadership*

The transformation leadership model was first introduced by James Burns in 1978 and focused on satisfying the needs of followers. Transformational school leaders inspire loyalty and generate excitement among faculty, resulting in commitment.

Transformational leadership is change-oriented and is often practiced by charismatic leaders using strong emotions and personality to encourage buy-in. An advantage of

transformational leadership rests in its ability to motivate followers (Miller, Devin, & Shoop, 2007). Fundamental to transformational school leadership is the empowerment of employees through delegation. Empowerment develops through assignment of tasks perceived as important or requiring a degree of expertise. Ward and MacPhail-Wilcox (1999) in their book, *Delegation and Empowerment*, comment:

When a capable employee is delegated an operation with appropriate responsibility and resources with which to accomplish the operation, they are *empowered* to contribute or develop their skill and knowledge toward the accomplishment of something important to the welfare of students, fellow employees, and the school. (p. 17)

Sociability and emotional intelligence are valued characteristics of transformational leadership, and leaders exhibiting these traits skillfully motivate, influence, and cultivate their staff. Moore (2009) states, “without leaders who understand, accept, and work with the emotions associated with school reform, the intellectual, collaborative, and social capacities of students and teachers may never reach their full capacities” (p. 25). Goleman (1995) popularized the term *emotional intelligence*, as the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate one’s emotions, as well as the emotions of others, and use this information in conjunction with social skills to guide thinking, motivate, and lead (p. 119). Today’s principals enter the profession ill-prepared to support, instruct, and balance patience and perseverance during eras of transformation as dictated by reform movements. Andrews (2004) attributes the success of individuals possessing a high degree of emotional intelligence to their understanding and usage of emotions in a variety of settings. Andrews adds, “their ability to express themselves and influence others makes them natural leaders, as well” (p. 9). It is extremely important for

administrators to have teacher buy-in, community support, and student attention if the school is to establish a positive culture and achieve professional growth. The emotionally intelligent leader is intrinsically motivated, goal-oriented, and able to channel negative emotions into positive dialogue. The emotionally intelligent leader not only recognizes the importance of emotional meaning and is aware of and manages his or her own emotions, but he or she also skillfully responds to others' emotions in a positive way (Andrews, 2004). Leadership preparation programs should emphasize the expansion of school administrators' sociability and emotional intelligence by placing it at the forefront of training programs. Recruiting new school administrators who have been trained in the areas of empathy, emotional self awareness, and flexibility are likely to make significant differences in school culture and initiate change. Leaders unskilled in managing the emotional stress accompanied by paradigm shifts in education, as experienced by students and teachers during times of increased accountability, are unlikely to endure the transformation process.

### *Transactional Leadership*

Transactional leaders, often referred to as *bureaucratic leaders*, demonstrate efficiency in management. Rewards and punishment as factors of motivation form the foundation of this model. This leadership model is aligned with the autocratic style of decision-making and supports only slow, gradual change. Members of transactional organizations feel powerless as decisions are made solely by administrators.

Transactional leaders expect obedience based on positions of authority and the chain of command. "This type of leader might be described as *doing things right* rather than *doing the right thing*" (Miller et al., 2007, p. 25). Maintaining current practices and policies is indicative of this leadership style which tends to focus more on the management aspect of

leadership than the consensus-building side. The trading of one thing for something else (quid pro quo), also referred to as contingent rewards, is commonly practiced in transformation leadership (Northouse, 2007).

### *Total Quality Management*

Total Quality Management (TQM) founded by W. E. Deming (Walton, 1986) is applicable to school reform efforts. Effective leaders incorporate TQM's 14 principles into a continuous process of improvement via short-term goal attainment based on teamwork and trust-building (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). TQM empowers faculty teams to work cross-functionally to achieve goal-driven transformation (Ward & MacPhail-Wilcox, 1999). TQM was initially described in the 1930s as a reform approach applied to industry and manufacturing contexts. This model is client-centered, strives for excellence, and is applicable to the field of education. The manager-worker philosophy supported in this model employs a team approach to productivity whereby improving culture increases productivity. Leaders inspire trust and loyalty through open communication channels with employees such that workers collaboratively engage in creative risk-taking and the generation of new ideas.

### *Contingency Theory*

Northouse (2007) credits Fiedler, Garcia, and Chemers with developing contingency theory and describes interest in pairing appropriate leadership styles to situations as the commonality between contingency theory and path-goal theory. Two styles included in this theory are task-motivation (goal reaching) and relationship motivation (interpersonal relations). Leadership training would focus on various organizational dynamics and guide aspiring leaders in appropriate, professional responses to situations. Leadership efficiency in this model is dependent upon two factors:

matching leader behavior to member need, and strength of problem-solving and decision-making abilities. (Northouse, 2007).

### *Situational Leadership*

Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard's (1982) Theory of Situational Leadership was first introduced in 1977, and then expanded in 1982. This model is based upon the belief that leaders will adapt their behavior according to situational demands. The theory describes the connection between effective leadership and employee job maturity level, also referred to as *task maturity*. Task maturity may vary within individuals or groups as different tasks and situations are encountered. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) identified four leader styles of behavior corresponding to employees' willingness and ability to perform a task: (a) high productivity/low relationship emphasis (telling style); (b) high productivity/high relationship emphasis (selling style); (c) low productivity/high relationship emphasis (participating style); and (d) low productivity/low relationship emphasis (delegating style). Leadership effectiveness is contingent upon the correct match of style with employee task maturity.

### *Adult Learning Theory*

Described by M. S. Knowles (1973), adult learning theory presents teaching and learning implications to be considered by educators of adults. Adults tend to define themselves by their past experiences and consider them valuable in determining self-worth. As creatures of habit, adults are less open-minded than children, as they acquire new information and try to fit it into pre-existing contexts. They possess a set of unique contributions to the learning process. Adults thrive in learning environments whereby instructional delivery is designed to incorporate their vast life experiences. Adults benefit from group discussions, case studies, simulations, and role playing. Skillful adult

educators design lessons in such a way that knowledge attained can be transferred to daily life, understanding that adults have an immediacy toward applying learning.

Teachers of adult learners should consider the orientation of the curriculum and design of the learning experience. According to Knowles (1973):

Where youth educators can, perhaps appropriately, be primarily concerned with the logical development of subject matter and its articulation from grade to grade according to levels of complexity, adult educators must be primarily attuned to the existential concerns of the individuals and institutions they serve and be able to develop learning experiences that will be articulated with these concerns. (p.54)

Teachers of adult learners are challenged with the task of assisting their students in clearing their minds of misconceptions, a practice referred to as *unfreezing*. This process promotes objectivity in learners' acquisition of new knowledge. Joseph (2010) comments on the significance of timing in adult learning. Joseph states, "reintroducing relevant theory when a candidate is in an administrative role is a promising practice that can result in substantive, reflective learning" (p. 6).

### Leadership Defined

"Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school," according to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004, p. 5). Leadership is defined by Northouse (2007) as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). Northouse (2007) believed that leadership exists as a transactional event by which leaders influence subordinates toward achievement of common goals. Robbins and Judge (2010) refer to leadership as a quality existing within a leader, rather than a process. Gorton et al. (2007) report that effective leaders are: (a) competent; (b) skillful

communicators; (c) patient; (d) inspirational; (e) not afraid to admit mistakes; (f) trusting and open-minded; (g) dedicated to keeping promises; (h) eternally optimistic; and (i) respectful of diversity. Leithwood et al. (2004) adds “mostly leaders contribute to student learning indirectly, through their influence on other people or features of their organizations” (p. 13). Marzano et al. (2005) purport that school leadership, in the form of the principalship, has a direct impact on student learning. Marzano et al. (2005) examined the extent to which leadership determines the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a school and links the importance of leadership to the success of any endeavor, including schools. “Given the perceived importance of leadership, it is no wonder that an effective principal is thought to be a necessary precondition for an effective school leader” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 5). Marzano et al. (2005) state:

Specific behaviors and characteristics associated with being a responsible leader are: consciously challenging the status-quo; being willing to lead change initiatives with uncertain outcomes; systematically considering new and better ways of doing things; and consistently attempting to operate at the edge versus the center of the school’s competence. (p. 45)

In addition, Blaydes (2004) presents skills required of school administrators to successfully lead 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools. According to Blaydes:

Effective school leaders need to know how to think, make decisions, solve problems, plan for the future, communicate successfully, use time efficiently, facilitate change, manage budgets, improve instruction, create a positive school culture, increase test scores, and inspire those whom they lead to achieve their greatest potential. (p. 2)



Blaydes (2004) identifies the *Rs* of school leadership practiced by effective leaders: “resiliency, renewal, and reflection” (p. 3). The solid framework representative of an effective principal is based upon several assumptions:

1. Does the right thing and is not just doing things right
2. Recognizes teaching and learning as the main business of the school
3. Inspires in others a shared vision
4. Communicates the school’s mission clearly and consistently to staff members, parents, and students
5. Fosters standards for teaching and learning that are high and attainable
6. Provides clear goals and monitors the progress of students toward meeting them
7. Spends time in the classrooms interacting with students and observing teachers
8. Promotes an atmosphere of trust and sharing
9. Builds a good staff and makes professional development a top concern by creating a community of learners. (Blaydes, 2004, p. 4)

According to Darling-Hammond and Friedlaender (2008),

Schools need well-prepared principals who are strong instructional leaders. Principals need to know how to plan professional development, redesign school organizations, and manage a change process. In addition, they need to know how to organize staffing and teacher time to reduce class size, create teams, incorporate advisory systems, and provide time for collaboration and professional learning opportunities. (p. 15)

Strong leaders can be developed by recruiting potential personnel who possess leadership characteristics designed to reflect today's students. Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, and Cohen (2007) recommend supporting high-quality preparation programs, possibly to include paid internships, whereby expert administrators mentor potential administrators. Additional support should be provided to revise existing programs to include clinical experiences at successful, innovative sites.

Marzano et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis, a research process supporting the acceptance of statistically-based assumptions examining the impact of leadership behavior on student achievement. A total of 69 studies of 2,802 schools were included in the meta-analysis. The subjects included approximately 1.4 million students and 1,400 teachers. Results of the meta-analysis concluded that student academic achievement can be altered through the effectiveness of a school leader.

### *Leadership versus Management*

Vital to successful school operations is the educational administrator's ability to distinguish between leadership and management. Hoerr (2005) states, "unless principals are careful, they can spend so much time doing the tasks that are necessary to survive that they ignore the building of relationships that are necessary to succeed" (p. 31). Covey (2004) comments, "no management success can compensate for failure in leadership" (p. 102). Efficient leaders are resourceful managers and effective delegators. Management refers to result-driven activities requiring leaders to plan, organize, implement, and direct. Ramsey (2005) claims that managers deal with matters of the moment but are not necessarily visionaries, whereas leaders energize, create, model, and inspire. "They shape the organization, involve others in creating its future, and model ways to make it happen"

(Ramsey, 2005, p. 7). Ramsey identifies passion as the most important characteristic possessed by effective leaders

### *Leadership Qualifications*

Prospective administrators must meet eligibility requirements to receive certification upon successful completion of university course work, specified years of teaching experience, and attainment of required scores on licensing exams. By current standards, prospective administrators must possess a master's degree through a state-approved leadership preparation program to earn administrative credentials.

The Louisiana Department of Education (2012) requires potential school leaders to obtain certification in educational leadership. This certification authorizes candidates to fill assistant principal, principal, and supervisory positions within the district. In Louisiana, educational leadership certification may be obtained through one of four pathways:

*Master's Degree Path* - for persons seeking to earn an advanced degree and add Educational Leader certification to a valid teaching certificate

*Alternate Path 1* - for persons who already hold a master's degree and are seeking to add Educational Leader certification to a valid teaching certificate via an individualized plan-of-study from a state-approved educational leader program provider

*Alternate Path 2* - for persons who already hold a master's degree *in education* and are seeking to add Educational Leader certification to a valid teaching certificate via documented evidence of leadership experiences

*Alternate Path 3* - for persons who already hold a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education and are seeking to add

Educational Leader certification to a valid teaching certificate through a competency-based educational leader practitioner (residency) program.

(Louisiana Department of Education, 2012, p. 1)

Following achievement of educational leadership certification, all newly hired administrators must participate in the Louisiana Educational Leadership Induction program (LELI). For a full year, administrators will attend regional meetings, monthly district meetings, and compile an extensive portfolio demonstrating proficiency in state-wide leadership standards under the direction of a mentor. Professional development in the areas of school improvement and technology must be obtained, as well as job shadowing experience.

With the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), mandated accountability initiatives have intensified, and the field of educational leadership is one that has been impacted by reforms. Prior to NCLB, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (1996) envisioned a framework for preparing educational leaders for administrative demands and future reforms. In 1994, the CCSSO established the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), a means of enabling states to collaborate as they develop professional practice standards, professional development, assessment techniques, and licensure protocols. Societal changes in the form of increased technological dependence, increased globalized competition, increased poverty levels, and a decrease in physical, mental, and moral health will require innovative, contemporary school leadership. In redesigning educational leadership training to meet the changing needs of 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools, the ISLLC relied upon research derived from effective schools and practices of their leaders in obtaining positive learning outcomes. The following six standards were devised by the ISLLC for the purpose of guiding the

quality of educational leadership for school administrators and have become criteria for certification:

Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Standard 2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, p. 12)

### *Leadership Responsibilities*

Increased accountability mandates to schools have been enacted as states respond to pressures of producing skillful, technological, and globally marketable citizens. The effectiveness of school leaders is predicated upon their ability to expertly educate students, regardless of changing societal norms. Although the demographics of diverse student populations continue to evolve, educational leaders are expected to assure the delivery of quality instruction designed to meet student needs, often without support. Today's educators have been inadequately prepared for their extensive list of responsibilities. In the report *Educating School Leaders*, Levine (2005) states:

In an outcome-based and accountability-driven era, administrators have to lead schools in the rethinking of goals, priorities, finances, staffing, curriculum, pedagogies, learning resources, assessment methods, technology, and the use of time and space. They have to recruit and retain top staff members and educate newcomers and veterans alike to understand and become comfortable with an education system undergoing dramatic and continuing change. They have to ensure the professional development that teachers and administrators need to be effective. They have to prepare parents and students for the new realities and provide them with the support necessary to succeed. They have to engage in continuous evaluation and school improvement, create a sense of community, and build morale in a time of transformation. (p. 12)

### *Principal Shortage*

What is needed now, more than ever before, are strong, knowledgeable, effective principals who can drive their schools toward excellence. Yet, as the rate of retiring principals reaches heightened levels, research indicates that fewer teachers express

interest in pursuing leadership positions. Of those teachers deciding to become school leaders, many are ill-prepared for the demanding role, and too few remain in the position. It is reported (Owings et al., 2011) that principal shortages vary among districts based upon schools' geography and characteristics, as well as community socioeconomics, with declining applicant pools more pronounced in secondary schools. Owings et al. continue:

Students in low-wealth schools are more likely to have a first-year principal, a principal with less average experience, a temporary or interim principal, a principal without at least a master's degree, or a principal who went to a less selective college as compared with peers in higher wealth schools. (p. 215)

Moreover, a greater number of potential administrators apply for job openings at academically competitive schools serving fewer minority, poor, or low-achieving student populations. According to a 2003 survey conducted by The Education Alliance at Brown University, National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2003), of 215 Louisiana teachers holding administrative certification, only half aspired to become principals. Reasons for lack of interest in the principalship included: (a) increased responsibility and job complexity; (b) stressful work conditions; and (c) deficient resources and support. "The fact is, principals have traditionally been thrown into their jobs without a lifejacket, and they are expected to sink or swim" (NAESP, 2008, p. 8). In light of increasing job demands, school districts must assure that novice principals be supported by experienced colleagues when solving difficult problems (NAESP, 2003).

The magnitude of the jobs that principals and assistant principals are expected to perform, combined with increased accountability mandated by educational reforms, will result in a large number of school leaders needing to be hired in the next decade (Levine, 2005). Fewer qualified candidates are applying for positions in educational leadership.

Ramsey (2005) states, “today the flood of applications for school administrative openings has diminished to a trickle. Worse yet, the applicants who are available and interested aren’t always high quality leadership material” (p. 1). In its report of 16 states serviced by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2003) a lack of qualified candidates for potential principal positions is made evident. The SREB reported finding *qualified* candidates to be a problem, although certified candidates were plentiful. The report affirms SREB’s position that certification is not indicative of quality. Reported by SREB (2003), of the 35 certified applicants for a single principal position, district criteria were met by none.

Ramsey (2005) accredits subsiding interest in the field to seemingly insurmountable problems in schools, extended work hours, limitless responsibilities, few incentives, and a declining respect for school administrators by the community. Despite increased salaries, principals are continuing to exit the profession. Principal wages reported by the NCES (2007) indicated an average salary increase from \$104,600 in 1993-94 to \$115,000 in 2003-04. Alternative career options are another reason for a shrinking pool of qualified applicants.

According to Lazaridou (2009), a “principal succession crisis” is indicative of “a worrisome aversion to the office of principal that has become apparent” (p. 1). A research study was conducted by Munby (2006) whereby subjects were questioned about their disinterest in filling a principalship position. Among reasons for disinterest were: (a) job demands and related stress; (b) personal reasons; (c) decreased student contact; (d) decreased teaching opportunities; (e) lack of interest; (f) accountability mandates; (g) balancing management and instruction; (h) increasingly diversified student body; (i) lack of financial resources; and (j) facing possible termination if goals were not met.



Militello, Gajda, and Bowers (2009) claim that nationwide school improvement reforms will be contradicted by unfilled administrative positions. Odds are against the retention of skillful principals in consideration of a diminishing applicant pool, increased retirement, and high-stakes accountability.

DeAngelis and White (2011) described an investigation into the reasons for principal turnover during the 2001-2008 time period in the State of Illinois. The participants included 7,075 principals who served as principals for at least one year during the specified time period. This study expanded on a previous study (Ringel, Gates, Chung, Brown, & Ghosh-Dastidar, 2004) investigating principal retention and attrition rates from 1987 to 2001 in Illinois. A comparison between studies indicated a significantly higher retention rate (86%) in Ringel et al.'s 2004 study than in the recent study (79.1%), indicating a decline in principal permanence in times of elevated accountability demands and public criticism.

Data indicate that 8.4% of principals left Illinois Public Schools, and 89.3% had not returned to the district by 2008. Principals under the age of 40 exhibited a higher return rate (30.4%) than those over 40 years of age. Of all principals leaving positions to pursue opportunities outside of education, roughly two-thirds (65.5%) retired. Of the principals who changed positions, the majority (72%) left their positions to pursue non-administrative positions, some (11%) became assistant principals, and others (10%) returned to teaching. According to DeAngelis and White (2011), "these findings suggest that some Illinois principals may not be or perceive themselves to be adequately prepared for or well-suited for the role" (p. 3).

### *Recruitment & Retention of Leaders*

Despite data indicating an excess of 15,000 master's degrees and 2,300 doctoral degrees earned in educational administration in 2004, prospects seeking educational leadership positions remain grim. Recruiters face the challenge of persuading qualified candidates to seek school administrative positions. Enticing potential candidates may be achieved through a supportive, high-quality leadership program designed to ease the transition into school administration (Levine, 2005). The NAESP (2003) reported results from a Public Agenda Survey. "According to a Public Agenda Survey, 84% of superintendents say they are actively and deliberately grooming someone on their staff for a more senior position, and most principals (67%) say they are doing the same in their schools" (NAESP, 2003, p. 12). Regarding recruitment, Chapman (2005) suggests, "a deliberate strategy, instituted at school, local, and national levels, is needed to address the demand for and the supply of an adequate cadre of principals" (p. 14). Cranston (2007) describes aspiring administrators' concerns with the recruitment process,

Concerns over recruitment and selection processes, in so far as they are seen by some applicants as not to be fair and well understood, need attention – it is clear that unsuccessful applicants need frank and detailed feedback such that they clearly understand (and accept) that the process is not at fault, but that either they 'lost out' to a better applicant or perhaps that they were not suitable for the position – currently, many applicants hold quite different views, negatively impacting on perceptions of the selection process and affecting the likelihood of their applying again in the future. (p. 128)

Other noteworthy recruitment considerations should include the nature of the candidate search. Based upon program type and annual salary associated with the position, the

decision of whether to conduct the search locally, nationally, or internationally would have to be made. The applicant screening process should include these stakeholders: (a) school district administrators; (b) university representatives; (c) administrative interns; and (d) program director. A collaborative support system would ensue, which may prove to be valuable for all involved parties. Chapman (2005) reports that informal, sporadic attempts at recruiting prospective administrative candidates have not generated productive results. Few candidates admit that training institutions impacted their decision to pursue a career in educational leadership. Candidates for university programs are typically local residents and are already employed as teachers or administrators. These factors raise concern for students' readiness to accept new ideas deviating from community norms. Processes of admission into university programs do not reflect high standards. Many colleges simply require a baccalaureate degree to secure entry and offer fragmented programs presenting theory in isolation. Absent of contexts with which to connect principles, instruction has little meaning. Inapplicable curricula, combined with misguided state licensure requirements, deters potential candidates from entering the profession. Concern continues to exist over the disparity between theory and practice. The perception of new leaders is that university teachings have proven to be inapplicable to situations encountered by functioning administrators. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2003) calls for state leaders to collaborate with all stakeholders involved in preparing school leaders. It suggests:

- (a) build the pool of high-achieving principal candidates, (b) accelerate the redesign of principal preparation programs, (c) make field-based experiences a central focus of principal preparation programs, (d) link principal licensure to performance, (e) move accomplished teachers into principal positions, and (f)

sharpen the focus of state leadership academies and cultivate leadership teams in middle-tier schools. (p. 29)

Increasing the level of professional development offered may be one way of keeping principals in their positions. In 2000, The Education Research Service (ERS) (2000) cited a lack of professional development opportunities for principals, although school administrators had expressed the need to refine their management and relationship building skills. Specifically, principals seek to network with colleagues for idea-sharing and discussing common job elements. The need for follow-up training, whereby instructions for how to put ideas into practice, was also noted. Describing early district training initiatives, Peterson and Kelley (2001) reported the Chicago Public Schools district offering extensive professional development training for aspiring principals, as well as beginning principals and veteran principals. These professional development opportunities addressed needs unique to administrators at each experience level. Simulation, reflection, coaching, and case study were among techniques utilized.

In an accountability-driven system, as student performance is measured, so are the competencies of administrators in their roles. Incentive-pay programs have emerged in some districts, thus recognizing and rewarding administrative effectiveness in three dimensions: student performance, teacher retention, and financial management (Fernandez et al., 2007). Performance contracts have been identified as a means of preventing principal turnover. In a dissertation entitled *A Comprehensive Evaluation of a School System's Grow Your Own Principal Preparation Program*, Joseph (2009) states, "increasingly, school districts are adopting or contemplating the use of performance contracts (also known as pay for performance)" (p. 82). Joseph adds, "performance contracts include bonuses for a job well done" (p. 83).

### Lack of Leadership Preparedness

Despite the level of formal training, new educational leaders commonly feel unprepared. Newly appointed administrators will commonly face challenges regarding policies and procedures, and novice leaders often feel that their decisions are inferior to those made by veteran leaders. Robbins and Alvy (2009) encourage educational leaders to embrace the practice of continuous learning, as it is a precursor for professional growth. Hess and Kelly (2005) report that today's superintendents want their principals to be well-versed in all aspects of school leadership, but the principals, themselves, do not feel adequately prepared for the many facets of administration. Of further concern, approximately 96% of principals surveyed in the Public Agenda report stated that their colleagues were more instrumental in preparing them for leadership responsibilities than did their university programs. Also, two-thirds of those practicing principals claimed, "leadership programs in graduate schools of education are out of touch" (Hess & Kelly, 2005, p. 1) with preparing administrators to meet job demands, and leadership training is disconnected from realities of effective leadership. While 48 states mandate principals to earn educational administration certification, the current principal preparation programs are a major disappointment. Hess and Kelly (2005) question, "why does there seem to be such a wide gulf between what principals say they need to know to do their job and what they are taught in education programs required by state departments of education?" (p. 2). In Hess and Kelly's (2005) preparation coursework survey data, results were atypical and not aligned with leadership expectations. They report:

We expected to find that many of the lessons on managing for results would be spent teaching principals to leverage accountability systems to help improve instruction and drive student achievement. No less than 63 percent of

superintendents report that raising student achievement is the biggest part of a principal's evaluation, reports Public Agenda. Instead, only 13 percent of the course weeks spent on managing for results actually attempted to link school management to standards-based accountability systems, state assessments, or the demands of No Child Left Behind. Unless the topic was being smuggled in elsewhere in the course, only about 50 out of 2,424 course weeks--or 2 percent of all instruction--addressed accountability as a management issue. (Hess & Kelly, 2005, p. 2)

Hess and Kelly (2005) also report that principals must be competent in the use of data, research, and associated technology, but only 29% of preparation course work addressed the topic. Additionally, only 15% of coursework was devoted to the topic of managing personnel, which encompasses skills required to effectively hire and evaluate faculty. At the same time, observations, supervision, coaching and mentoring were covered in more detail; however, linking evaluation to student achievement and using systematic evaluation to identify and dismiss ineffective personnel were not adequately covered. Hess and Kelly (2005) conclude,

There is little evidence that principal preparation programs are designed in ways to introduce students to a broad range of management, organizational, or administrative theory and practice. On the contrary, they rely heavily on texts and other works written by professors of education administration. (p. 3)

### *Budget and Finances*

Decision-making authority over the budgetary process varies from one entity to the next, often depending upon state and district policies. Most building-level principals are entrusted with the duties of preparing and administering the budget at their sites,

regardless of inexperience with site-based decision-making. Novice principals' insecurities in dealing with financial matters are magnified when called upon to publicly address fund distribution. New administrators lack expertise in prioritizing spending by means of needs versus requests.

District and state policies, as well as district leaders, predetermine the extent to which involvement with the budget occurs. According to Robbins and Alvy (2009), principals are concerned with budgeting and specific accounting procedures in their schools. Specifically, budgetary categories, the coding of items, budgetary time lines, transferring funds, budget shortfalls, and the allocation of funds represent areas of uncertainty.

### *Legal Issues*

In a society where litigation is prominent, courts hold high expectations for school leaders to be well-versed in the rights and responsibilities of students, schools, and districts. Courts do not accept unfamiliarity with school law as a basis for school leaders to act illegally or irresponsibly. According to LaMorte (2008), educators whose actions are based in accordance with personal beliefs of what the law *should* be, must consider the legal ramifications of conduct misaligned with policies. LaMorte (2008) adds,

Groundbreaking court decisions dealing with issues such as school desegregation, separation of church and state, the extent to which students and teachers may engage in freedom of expression, due process of both students and teachers, individuals with disabilities, equitable financing of public school, and personnel all attest to the extent and magnitude of judicial influence. (p. xxv)

### *Curriculum & Instruction*

School leaders are expected to support instructional activities and demonstrate knowledge of instructional programs. According to Oliva (2009), activities indicative of proficient instructional leadership find administrators facilitating collaborative staff efforts, formulating research-based decisions, designing professional development activities, conducting classroom observations, and evaluating teachers. Leaders must possess knowledge of curricula construction in order to effectively evaluate a school's instructional programs. They must consider the following factors when evaluating curriculum: (a) goals; (b) scope; (c) relevance; (d) balance; (e) integration; (f) sequence; (g) continuity; (h) articulation; and (i) transferability. According to Militello et al. (2009), novice administrators have reported university programs inadequately preparing them to handle assessments and standards, data analysis, and curriculum development. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) are supportive of training programs in which content is delivered methodically in such a way as to afford prospective administrators the opportunity to “apply curricular content in authentic settings and toward the resolution of real-world problems and dilemmas” (p. 12).

### *School Management*

Principals are responsible for daily school operations and campus management. These duties expand to include overseeing both certificated and noncertificated personnel. Ensuring that routines, policies, and practices are implemented to promote productivity, along with the accompanying accountability, is of utmost concern. The principal will determine teaching assignments for faculty and schedules for non-certificated personnel, such as custodians, cafeteria attendants, and transportation personnel. To this end, novice administrators need guidance in development of schedules,



along with evaluative procedures. Careful examination of the physical plant must be taken to ensure student and employee safety. Managing a facility presents a challenge for novice administrators who have not thoroughly oriented themselves to the campus and its unique characteristics. Facility management issues are unique to specific sites, with competency being acquired on the job. Training programs cannot fully prepare graduate students to deal with issues such as: burglar alarms, plumbing, storage, lawn care, painting, sprinkler systems, air-conditioning, cafeteria procedures, cleaning routines, pest control, and proper inspection of furniture, equipment, and fixtures. New leaders must also be aware of policies regarding the use of facilities by community members, and develop skills for dealing with crises. Robbins and Alvy (2009) identify knowledge required for crisis intervention to include a speedy response to the accident, which can be facilitated by quick access to emergency numbers and personnel by knowledge of first aid. Regarding the public, communication skills are essential for diffusing situations and/or accurately reporting information to stakeholders, including parents, faculty, students, board members, central office personnel, law enforcement officers, and the media.

### *Leading Change*

"The principalship is a position that is absolutely critical to educational change and improvement. A good principal can create a climate that can foster excellence in teaching and learning while an ineffective one can quickly thwart the progress of the most dedicated performers" (ERS, 2000, p.15). Developing a shared vision for the school is the initial step in building a capacity for change. Green (2005), in his book *Supervision of Instruction: A Developmental Approach* recommends instilling ownership of reform practices by fostering an environment of shared decision-making. Increasing building-

level faculty awareness of existing problems is a leadership strategy for promoting change. New administrators lacking experience with instructional planning and group dynamics may be inept at facilitating collaborative relationships. Whaley (2002) claims that leading change requires the implementation of a specific set of skills. Whaley (2002) states,

Listening, asking questions, engaging faculty and staff in conversation about teaching and learning, collecting and analyzing data, and benchmarking promising practices are replacing top-down driven directives, traditional models of supervision, and the expectation that the leader has all the answers. (p. 96)

Transformation will depend on leaders and faculty to foster change by assuming responsibility for school improvement and by communicating goals and collaborating effectively with others. Effective leaders facilitate change by optimizing employees' comfort level regarding the change process. Whaley (2002) comments, "nothing defines a school's ability to serve its customers quite like its propensity for innovation. The school's orientation to change is embedded in its culture and is reflected in the collective mindset of the faculty and staff" (p. 97).

### Leadership Preparation Programs

#### *Overview of Preparation Programs*

A historical perspective of educational leadership categorizes its evolution into four major eras (Murphy, 1992): the ideology era (1820-1900), the prescriptive era (1900-1945), the behavioral science/professionalism era (1946-1985), and the dialectic era (1985-present). The ideology era was characterized by minimal formal preparation, and little documentation exists regarding training methods during this time.

Administrators were viewed as philosophers and educators. The prescriptive era

experienced the emergence and development of administrative preparation programs issuing certification. In this era, administrators were perceived as technical experts. The behavioral science/professionalism era experienced criticism of preparation programs, and training institutions were encouraged to craft stronger programs. During this era, administrators were seen as social scientists and professionals. The dialectic era supports alternative visions of education. The nature of evolving schools is analyzed to determine best practices for the revision of current preparation programs (Murphy, 1992).

Huber (2004) recognizes the growing acceptance and implementation of principal preparation programs. Huber (2004) claims the establishment and use of training programs in the United States have been in place for many years and have now expanded globally. Bush (2008) claims:

The literature on leadership development is extensive and methods which are perceived to be effective in both the public and private sectors include: on-the-job and in-house training; coaching and mentoring; the use of consultants; formal induction; and job rotation. (p. 309)

Greenlee, Bruner, and Hill (2009) describe preparation programs being condemned by school leaders, referring to them as unrealistic, impractical, and inconsiderate of student realities. They recommend for educational leadership programs to commit to and act upon these factors:

1. A critical mass of faculty wanting to move forward. The champion of the movement cannot work in isolation.
2. Good relationships with local school districts to allow for continuous interchange of energies, mutual needs, and ideas.
3. Meaningful field experiences are essential to connect theory and practice.

4. Flexibility in schedules, models of delivery, and continuous examination of course content is important and necessary for program improvement.

(Greenlee et al, 2009, p. 46)

Lazaridou (2009) comments on the urgency of identifying the skills principals need to be successful by,

The need to refine understandings of the tools principals use when they work to influence events in and around their schools has acquired greater urgency because of three interacting factors:

1. In many jurisdictions there is a crisis in succession.
2. In many instances preparation programs appear to be deficient, even misdirected.
3. There is uncertainty about the kinds of knowledge principals now need.

(p. 1)

Cowie and Crawford (2007) identify two considerations crucial to the development of principal preparation programs: succession planning and individuals' needs. They add:

From the system's perspective there is a supply problem with large numbers of vacancies anticipated over the next few years. From the perspective of individuals, it is important that people are encouraged to want to do the job first and foremost, and that opportunities are provided to allow aspiring school principals to acquire appropriate knowledge and understanding. (Cowie & Crawford, 2007, p. 131)

Candidates also need to be provided with opportunities to merge theory into practice.

They must prepare for, and gain confidence in dealing with leadership and management

issues likely to occur once in an appointed administrative position. The benefits of practical experience are especially true for administrators receiving assignments in large and/or challenging school settings (Cowie & Crawford, 2007).

In order to effectively assess a leadership preparation program's usefulness in training school administrators, Levine (2005) suggests nine criteria by which to measure a program, stating that exemplary programs meet all nine points: (a) purpose; (b) curricular coherence; (c) curricular balance; (d) faculty composition; (e) admissions; (f) degrees; (g) research; (h) finances; and (i) assessment (p. 14)

### *Ineffective Programs*

Levine (2005) comments on the weakness of educational leadership programs in light of the growing principal shortage. Levine (2005) states:

Collectively, educational administration programs are the weakest of all the programs at the nation's education schools. This is distressing not only because of the magnitude of the jobs that principals and superintendents must perform, but also because of the large number of school leaders who will need to be hired in the next decade. (p. 13)

Disparities exist among stakeholders regarding leadership preparedness, particularly in the areas of certification and training. Levine (2005) lists unclear program goals and failure to self-assess as contributors to poor programs. Levine (2005) comments on inadequate programs:

Their curricula are disconnected from the needs of leaders and their schools. Their admission standards are among the lowest in American graduate schools. Their professoriate is ill equipped to educate school leaders. Their programs pay insufficient attention to clinical education and mentorship by successful

practitioners. The degrees they award are inappropriate to the needs of today's schools and school leaders. Their research is detached from practice. And their programs receive insufficient resources. (Levine, 2005, p. 23)

NAESP (2003) comments on results obtained from the 2001 Public Agenda Survey, which surveyed superintendents and principals. Approximately 70% of principal respondents agreed that typical graduate-school leadership programs are not aligned with realities of skills required to effectively run today's schools. One principal participating in the survey spoke of the lack of support he received as a new principal. The principal stated, "the support I received was minimal. My feet hit the floor and I learned by doing" (quoted in NAESP, 2003, p. 10).

Researchers have reported role ambiguity between practitioners and university officials regarding their levels of responsibility in principal preparation programs. Chapman (2005) describes the necessity for changes in approaches to leadership learning through collaboration. Chapman states,

There is a need for a fundamental rethinking of the content, structure, delivery, and assessment of leadership learning. This involves the development of a framework for leadership learning to ensure that formal university based programs, employer sponsored programs, and programs offered by leadership institutes and other providers of leadership development are complementary. There is a need for political will and the existence of incentives and rewards to bring about this cooperation and collaboration. (p. 15)

Levine (2005) reports the results of a principal's survey, including replies from 650 respondents. Respondents reported on coursework taken, coursework's relevance to the job, and coursework's quality rating. Over 90% of principals reported taking

instructional leadership, school law, educational psychology, and curriculum development in their respective preparation programs. School law ranked highest (80%) in relevancy to the job, with child and adolescent psychology (79%) ranking second, and instructional leadership (78%) ranking third. School law was determined to be rated the highest in quality above all other courses taken. Only 63% of principals found course teachings applicable to their jobs. Approximately half (56%) of all principals surveyed regarded their classes as high quality.

A similar study was conducted by Militello et al. (2009) of Massachusetts principals in 2007. The study sought to reveal the effectiveness of certification program offerings to job skill development. Of the 1,700 practicing principals in Massachusetts, 1,524 were questioned via an online survey. A 40% response rate was attained by the 605 principal respondents. Four courses taken were common to 70% of respondents: (a) school finance/budget; (b) learning/instructional leadership; (c) teacher supervision and evaluation; and (d) school law. Of 13 courses taken by all respondents, field experience was rated as *very* helpful, but school law and teacher supervision and evaluation were rated as the *most* helpful. School accountability and equity were labeled *least* helpful to a principal's practice. In consideration of how well training programs equipped principals with essential skills, percentages were low. Principals reported proficiency below the 30% level in all necessary skills, with the exception of legal aspects, which was slightly above the 30% level. Principals felt least prepared in the devising school improvement plans, ranking at the 10% level. General consensus of respondents indicated insufficient preparation by certification programs in skills relevant to job performance. According to Whaley (2002):

Most administrator training programs focus on what educational leaders *should* do rather than on mistakes or what they *should not do*. We believe knowing what not to do is as important, if not more important, than knowing what to do. This belief is based on the premise that the behaviors a person should avoid are far fewer than the behaviors a person should exhibit. It is also based on awareness that the negative fallout of one mistake may be far-reaching, offsetting the beneficial effects of a number of positive actions. (p. 76)

Overwhelming reports of substandard administrator preparation programs surfaced in the early 1990s through leading local, state, and national reform efforts. Of great negative impact was *Leaders for America's Schools*, reported by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987). For the purpose of inspecting the quality of educational leadership in America's schools, this report was generated at the request of the University Council of Educational Administration. Both exceptional and inadequate professors were discovered by the commission upon examination of preparation programs. Inefficient programs were categorized by their lack of several leadership components:

1. A definition of good educational leadership
2. Leader recruitment programs in the schools.
3. Collaboration between school districts and universities
4. Minorities and women in the field
5. Systematic professional development programs for school administrators
6. Quality candidates for preparation programs
7. Preparation programs relevant to the job demands
8. Sequence, modern content, and clinical experience



9. A system of licensing that promotes excellence
10. A national sense of cooperation. (National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, 1987, p. 6)

### *University Programs*

The emergence of public schools dictated a need for formal school leadership training. Beginning in the late 1800s, universities first offered administrative coursework, although program goals were not clearly defined. Coursework offerings evolved into graduate degree programs, and doctoral degrees in the field of educational administration emerged in the early 1900s. Contrasting points of view existed about the direction educational leadership programs should take. Programs were scrutinized for their lack of rigor, theory, and practicality. Regardless of program specificities, programs provided an initial means of recruiting potential leaders for rapidly growing schools throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Universities designed theory-based curricula and oversaw the recruitment, training, and licensing of candidates according to state guidelines and standards.

University programs met with opposition in the 1960s. Social changes initiated by the Civil Rights Movement led to attacks on university programs, whose designs were not aligned with society's shifting needs. In 1983, the publication of *A Nation at Risk* sparked the school reform movement (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Levine (2005) reports, "the reform movement put a spotlight on school leadership, highlighted its importance for school success, made student achievement the measure of school performance, and demanded accountability from leaders for results" (p. 17).

Public attention was drawn to the message, "America's schools were failing" (Levine, 2005, p. 18), and inadequate school leaders were placed at fault for the nation's massive problem. In 1987, the National Commission of Excellence in Educational Administration

(NCEE) issued the report *Leaders for America's Schools*. It states, “fewer than 200 of the country’s 505 graduate programs in educational administration were capable of meeting necessary standards of excellence” (NCEE, 1987, p. 18). In spite of the recommendation by the NCEE to dissolve approximately 60% of the nation’s existing graduate programs, leadership preparation programs have actually increased (Levine, 2005). Levine (2005) states:

The nation’s 1,206 schools, colleges, and departments of education are a sprawling enterprise spread among 57 percent of all four-year colleges and universities. They award one out of every 12 bachelor’s diplomas; a quarter of all master’s degrees; and 16 percent of all doctorates, more than any other branch of academy. (p. 5)

Public perception of the effectiveness of preparation programs is generally unfavorable. Falling short of public expectations, policy makers have infringed their authority upon the graduation and licensure requirements, instructional programs, and employee base of openly criticized universities. Universities have taken control over prospective school leaders’ preparedness programs by revising them to meet higher approval standards and rigid licensing requirements (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). The degree of adequate leadership preparation provided by university programs remains debatable. District superintendents and principals fault university certification programs for producing unqualified candidates. Policies for admissions into graduate programs have been regarded as weak. Earning an undergraduate degree, remitting tuition, and achieving a minimal score on the Graduate Records Exam (GRE) are the only contingencies upon which admission is based for most universities.

With declining enrollment into programs of educational administration, universities are engaged in marketing practices to attract potential applicants. Courses are offered at nontraditional times, such as during nights, weekends, or semester breaks. Admissions policies and residency requirements have become lenient, as well. Brooks (2010) speaks of universities providing online instruction as a means to build student enrollment. Learning institutions vary in the degree to which online classes are incorporated into training programs. While some institutions have established hybrid programs, others have transformed the instructional delivery to be conducted fully online.

Militello, Gajda, and Bowers (2009) comment on the benefits of the cohort model as an alternative training program for attracting candidates to university programs. Within the cohort model, candidates progress through a program's coursework with a group of individuals seeking common certification. This model promotes camaraderie, collegiality, and professional networking opportunities. The University of South Florida reports data sufficient to support its belief that cohort students are more likely to complete their degree programs. As cited by Militello et al. (2009), according to the university's records from 2002 and beyond, cohort students met graduation requirements at the rate of 91%. The university notes the significance of a cohort structure in mirroring learning communities, affording students experience with professional collaboration. Such expertise will be applicable to future educational leadership positions.

### *Mentorship and Internship*

A key factor in determining the success of an internship is the pairing of interns with successful mentors, usually practicing principals. Mentors will assume an active role in interns' professional development. Harris, Ballenger, and Leonard (2004) address the positive significance of assigning principals as mentors to prospective administrators.

Furthermore, they also reveal a disconnect between modeled applications versus instructional leadership expectations and standards-based accountability. They add, “aspiring principal students often use the behavior modeled by their principal mentor as a baseline for observing appropriate leadership behavior in the field” (Harris et al., 2004, p. 169). Essentially, it is important to pair aspiring administrators to principal mentors who effectively model standards-based instructional leadership competencies. The Southern Regional Education Board (2006) has identified good mentors as the key to successful internship experiences. Due to their extensive leadership knowledge and continued commitment to the profession, mentors establish an environment whereby rich experiences can be undertaken by participants. The SREB (2006) states:

Good mentors provide the day-to-day feedback and coaching that will help interns transition from the role of classroom teacher (or other roles) to that of school leader. They know how to structure opportunities for interns to solve a range of school problems, first through observing and participating and then by actually leading teams in identifying, implementing, and evaluating improvement interventions. Skillful mentoring helps interns shape beliefs – about whole-school change, students’ capacities to learn, relationships with staff and community members, and ethical leadership practices. In contrast, poor mentoring can put future principals (and school improvement efforts) at risk by limiting opportunities for broadening their perspective of principal leadership and school effectiveness. (p. 13)

Daresh (2001) initially addresses desirable characteristics of mentors:

1. Mentors should have experience as practicing school administrators, and they should generally be regarded by their peers and others as being effective.
2. Mentors must demonstrate generally accepted positive leadership qualities such as, but not limited to, intelligence; good oral and written communication skills; past, present, and future understanding with simultaneous orientation; acceptance of multiple alternative solutions to complex problems; and clarity of vision and the ability to share that vision with others in the organization.
3. Mentors need to be able to ask the right questions of beginning administrators and not just provide the right answers all the time.
4. Mentors must accept an alternate way of doing things and avoid the tendency to tell beginners that the way to do something is the way they used to do it.
5. Mentors should express the desire to see people go beyond their present levels of performance even if it might mean that the protégés are able to do some things better than the mentors can do them.
6. Mentors need to model the principles of continuous learning and reflection.
7. Mentors must exhibit the awareness of the political and social realities of life in at least one school system; they know the real ways that things get done. (p. 26)

Being a good principal does not necessarily make someone a good mentor. A special skill set, which spans beyond those required to demonstrate leadership, is necessary. Daresh (2001) identifies signals indicating one should not serve as a mentor:

1. Persons who are too heavily involved with the internal politics of a school system, to the extent that their primary goal is to survive the system and that of personal status will be ineffective mentors.
2. An individual who is new to a position will be ineffective in a relationship with another novice.
3. A marginally effective administrator should not be selected to serve as a mentor on the basis that such an assignment will serve to “fix” his shortcomings.
4. Ineffective mentors demonstrate “know-it-all” behaviors and attitudes when discussing their ways of dealing with administrative problems.

(p. 33)

The NAESP (2003) reported research results indicating that formal mentoring programs have been offered and experienced by principals. Further, less than half of superintendents interviewed stated the existence of formal induction or mentoring program for new principals in their districts. Minimal recruiting efforts to attract and prepare candidates for leadership positions were reported. Approximately one-fourth of the superintendents interviewed reported having recruiting programs. Lazaridou (2009) argues that the succession problem leading to a declining pool of qualified applicants for the principalship is also resulting in a dwindling number of experienced mentors. “Valuable experiential and tacit knowledge is disappearing” (NAESP, 2003, p. 2).

The benefits of field-based experience, commonly referred to as internship, are becoming an integral component of leadership preparation programs. Chapman (2005) identifies internships to be among the most effective strategies for developing leadership capacity. Internships enable aspiring administrators to receive on-the-job training in the form of field experience. Educational leaders credit on-the-job training, more so than formal preparation training, with teaching them how to perform their duties. Experience derived through a self-taught approach requires administrators to rely upon advice from role models and lessons learned inductively through the trial-and-error process. Greenlee et al. (2009) support a variety of internship placements claiming, “diverse schools and community agency placements extend the traditional principalship definition to the larger spectrum of community development leaders and promotes understanding of diversity in substantive ways” (p. 44).

The Southern Regional Education (SREB, 2005) purports the value of internships: In many professional fields, the internship is the ultimate performance test, the final rite of passage before gaining an initial license to practice. A well-designed internship expands the knowledge and skills of candidates while also gauging their ability to apply new learning in authentic settings as they contend with problems that have real-world consequences. Built right, the internship becomes a sturdy vessel upon which new practitioners can navigate the swift, unpredictable currents that separate classroom theory and on-the-job reality. (p. 3)

As early as the 1940s, and into the 1950s, some universities mandated internship experiences to satisfy certification requirements. By the 1960s, field-based experiences were supported by the American Association of School Administrators (ASAA) claiming that internship training is an essential component of school leadership training. An

alliance between ASAA and University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) resulted in a set of guidelines for internship programs. The growth and general acceptance of internships emphasized the need for collaboration during planning, implementing, and evaluation of programs (Chapman, 2005). Support for collaboration efforts within internships was professionally supported several decades ago, as the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987) commented:

The logic of professional preparation, which introduces students to theory and research and then guides them into the world of practice, is well-suited for the important work of school administration. The necessary close working relationship between the university and the world of practice will benefit the quality of research and the quality of administrator preparation. In addition, public interests are served by the fact that administrators have studied school administration in the university and have been mentored by a team of research and clinical professors prior to independent practice. (p. 20)

As the number of universities requiring internship components in leadership preparation programs surpassed 200 in the 1980s, program revisions were made to meet changing demands. By the 1990s, clearly defined internship goals provided frameworks for leadership preparation programs. To optimize the internship experience, the prospective leader should possess general administrative content knowledge and be paired with a mentor. The mentor's role in the internship process is critical for modeling and providing encouragement and guidance as interns learn to serve in an administrative capacity. According to Chapman (2005), leadership capacity via professional development is strongly enhanced through mentorships, and "the personal dimension makes it very resource-intensive" (p. 25). Simkins, Close, and Smith (2009) interpret the



objective of internships, also known as “job shadowing” to “extend the participants’ awareness of the range of pressures, challenges, micropolitics, strategies and other leadership dimensions” (p. 240) relative to the administrative job description. Mentors are trained to ask questions promoting reflective practice, which aids in problem-solving and strategic decision-making.

Harris et al. (2004) report, “aspiring principal students often use the behavior modeled by their principal mentor as a baseline for observing appropriate leadership behavior in the field” (p. 169). They suggest recruiting mentors who model standards-based leadership behaviors.

Crow (2005) states that despite the benefits of internships as learning tools, several pitfalls exist:

1. There is a tendency for interns to develop a heroic image of the head rather than seeing effective leadership as one which balances direct and distributive leadership.
2. There is danger that they perpetuate the status quo rather than encourage an innovative view of the role of school leader.
3. They can promote dysfunctional relationships between the mentor and the intern, when for example, the mentor has personal interests in mind rather than the intern’s learning. (p. 311)

A study into the effectiveness of administrative internships was conducted at the University of Texas in 1997 (Ovandi, 2000). Eligible participants were graduate students having completed a minimum of 30 hours of graduate studies. Mentors (field supervisors) were assigned to monitor and evaluate the process. Interns were placed among 14 school districts in various positions. Approximately half of the interns were placed as

administrative assistants (54%), with the majority (76%) serving in K-12 settings and the remainder (24%) placed at the central office. Approximately one-fourth (28%) were placed as assistant principals in the K-12 setting, while a small number (7%) were placed as elementary school principals. Upon completion of the semester-long program, field supervisors evaluated interns' performance and reported favorable results. Performance was ranked in one of three categories: outstanding (67%), above average (28%), or average (4%). Mentors identified balancing the budget, gaining additional experience, and managing personnel as areas in which interns needed continued support (Ovandi, 2000).

### *In-service & Induction*

A generally accepted and shared set of beliefs regarding effective leadership practices provide the foundation for well-defined, coherent training programs. Incorporating principles of adult learning theory, a program's learning activities should be sequential and goal-oriented, encourage self-reflection, consider past experiences, offer opportunities for application of leadership skills, and be based upon alignment of professional standards. According to Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005), "most preparation programs fall under one of four general types and should, therefore, be assessed relative to other programs within the same category: university-based programs, district-initiated programs, programs run by third parties, and programs run through partnerships between stakeholders" (p. 17). Davis et. al (2005) purport problem-based learning (PBL) provides application of skills through simulations as they mirror real-world dilemmas. Davis et al. state:

By participating in challenging and relevant simulations, students develop new attitudes and skills, experiment with various leadership roles, and, ideally, practice

the discipline of self-reflection. PBL methods also provide opportunities for candidates to test newly acquired leadership skills and receive feedback through authentic demonstrations and assessments. (p. 10)

Davis et al. (2005) present concerns with existing in-service training models, which arise from a variety of sources and present little consistency between programs. They state:

In-service training is provided through many disparate sources, including universities, school districts, county and state departments of education, professional associations, comprehensive school reform programs (e.g., accelerated schools), regional laboratories, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, and independent consultants. The diversity among these in-service programs raises serious questions about how to evaluate and compare program effectiveness given variations in clientele, training design, underlying learning theories, and specific learning objectives. (Davis et al., 2005, p. 17)

A study into an in-service program's perceived effectiveness by new administrators was conducted (Eller, 2010). The Western Virginia Public Education Consortium (WVPEC) and the Center for Organizational and Technological Advancement (COTA) at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University collaborated to develop "The Recently Appointed Administrators Program" (School Leaders Institute, 2010). Two and one-half days of in-service training are offered several times a year to new school leaders. Active educational leaders in the field and guest speakers delivered instruction, and opportunities for discussion, role playing, and group activity simulations occurred. Program participants included 16 cohort members from 2005-2006, and mentor relationships were established during the in-services. Participants indicated strengths of the program to include: (a) collegiality and networking; (b) guest speakers; (c) focus on

specific and practical information; and (d) group role-playing and interaction sessions. Most important outcomes included: (a) professional relationships; (b) leadership roles; (c) balance; and (d) delegation. Suggestions for improving in-service programs include: (a) more time for networking and problem-solving; (b) use of current technology; and (c) earlier presentation of topics relative to role clarification and socialization (Eller, 2010).

### District-Wide Leadership Preparation

#### *Alternatives to Traditional Leadership*

The lack of qualified candidates to fill vacant principal positions has forced school districts to create training programs for aspiring administrators. SREB (2006) reports promising results experienced by districts with in-house principal preparation programs. Joseph (2010) states,

If American schools of education are not adequately ensuring that there are quality candidates available to assume the principalship in American schools, then school districts must investigate ways to (a) effectively partner with schools of education as a form of quality control or (b) develop their own principal preparation programs to ensure excellence in every school building. (p. 1)

The increasingly complex job of a principal has caused many school districts to explore alternatives to traditional leadership models. Appearing in the journal *Educational Administration Quarterly*, the article “A Job too Big for One: Multiple Principals and Other Nontraditional Approaches to School Leadership” adds that operating a high-quality school, in light of high-stakes accountability, would require a heroic character, leaving educators to claim, “the job is just too big for one person” (Grubb & Flessa, 2006, p. 519). In a study conducted by Grubb and Flessa (2006), three alternative methods of school leadership were explored. The study examined 10 schools

representing each of the three models: (a) schools with multiple principals; (b) schools with rotating principals; and (c) schools with principal duties distributed among teachers.

Further descriptions of these models are provided,

1. Schools with two coprincipals—three coprincipals, in one case—that in turn fall into two subcategories: *divided schools* in which two coprincipals each operate a school that is largely independent of the other and *integrated schools* in which two coprincipals operate one integrated school.
2. An approach of a rotating principalship, in which an individual serves as principal for 3 years, training an incoming principal during this period and staying a 4<sup>th</sup> year to serve as mentor.
3. A small school with no principal, where the teachers have divided the principal's tasks among themselves. (Grubb & Flessa, 2006, p. 522)

Grubb and Flessa (2006) contend that of the three models, coprincipals (multiple principals) are most common and often utilized in large schools. In many coprincipal models, the school structure is divided. Two or more principals act simultaneously, simply with a smaller number of teachers and student with whom to work. Teachers in this setting view their principal as more accessible and supportive. A noted benefit of this model is referred to as *interchangeability*, representing another avenue of assistance. Also, there is always a principal on site in spite of illness or emergency experience by one of the principals. Specialization can flourish in an atmosphere where principals focus on specific areas of interest or personal strength.

In schools with rotating principals, preparing for succession—or a change in leadership—is not a problem. Part of this model's success is the constant training

component. Too often, schools remain stagnant in their growth while waiting for new principals to acclimate to the physical environment and unspoken culture. The rotating principals model prevents dormancy from impeding progress.

In small schools with no principal, the head of the school is referred to as a *head teacher*; the term *principal* is not used. Unique circumstance must exist in order for a self-governing school to run smoothly: (a) teacher leadership; (b) faculty cohesiveness; (c) collaborative practices; and (d) faculty stability. In this model, teachers serve on a multitude of committees and rotate every few years into the position of *head teacher*.

All three alternative models presented allowed for principals to have more time to devote to the instructional process. They were able to conduct more frequent observations and mingle with the students. According to Grubb and Flessa (2006), “alternative approaches have the potential for resolving the overload on principals, the impossibility of a job with increasing responsibilities, a job too big for one person” (p. 543).

Grubb and Flessa (2006) reported finances as a negative aspect of the multiple principal model. What does it cost to have several principals operating simultaneously? An implied inequity in the distribution of funds may occur when some schools are assigned multiple principals over other schools. “This is an example of what we call the politics of resentment: With restricted resources, any departure from equal treatment is interpreted as favoritism” (Grubb & Flessa, 2006, p. 541).

Richard (2000) noted actions taken in the past decade by some school districts in attempts to separate managerial duties and instructional duties. The creation of business managers called *bursars* had been established to ease the burden on principals. Concurrently, Ashford (2000) described how a school district in Houston, Texas, began

to certify business managers to help reduce principal duties related to finances, facilities management, data management, personnel, and policy compliance.

*“Grow Your Own” Programs*

Joseph (2010) reports, “with a shortage of candidates to assume the principalship, and with traditional preparation programs being criticized for not adequately preparing future administrative candidates, many school districts are attempting to develop their own principals through district-run programs” (p. 2). There are growing numbers of innovative, district level leadership preparation programs around the country based upon the *Grow Your Own* philosophy. In such cases, school systems design individualized programs tailored to meet specific district needs. Districts have become self-reliant in designing principal preparation programs to recruit and train potential administrators, rather than depending solely on university preparation programs to produce qualified candidates. An increasing pool of prepared applicants who are well-versed in district policies and procedures is an incentive to develop such programs. Prospective administrators gain knowledge and experience working with district policies and unique methods for dealing with procedures such as (a) financial management; (b) facilities management; (c) personnel evaluation; and (d) discipline reinforcement. While *grow your own* programs have gained popularity, research into their effectiveness and evaluation is modest. Literature and reviews are limited although large school systems around the country have implemented such programs in the past decade (DeRoche, 2010; Joseph, 2009; Miracle, 2006; Morrison, 2005).

In 1991, Milstein, Bobroff, and Restine presented benefits and problems with early district-wide principal preparation programs. They report:

The advantages of a school district-based program are the likelihood that the system's priorities will be emphasized and that system leaders will focus considerable attention on internship activities. Weaknesses include the danger that the program, although rich in field experiences, will be deficient in those elements that a university may be best suited to offer—reflection and academic content. Further, it is possible that internship programs, as one of many projects directed by central office role players, will become lost in the shuffle. (Milstein et al., 1991, p. 33)

An initiative to identify and prepare prospective administrators was undertaken in Indiana's Region 8 Education Service Center (NAESP, 2003). This district, which is represented by 14 counties and 32 school districts, developed the Aspiring Principals Academy. Program participants consist of teachers who have been identified as possessing leadership potential by practicing principals and superintendents. In this program,

Participants must attend eight dinner seminars and four all-day workshop sessions on topics related to school leadership. In addition, their building level principals serve as mentors and "critical friends" during the course of the academy program. The teachers spend four days shadowing their mentors while designing and implementing a school-improvement project that is based on reflective practice and documented with the preparation of a portfolio. Each participant also spends time with a secondary coach—usually an administrator from another school. (NAESP, 2003, p. 22)

Morrison (2005) conducted a study of a principal preparation program based on the grow your own concept in a mid-Atlantic state. Participants included 12 district



personnel and 111 administrative interns drawn from the Aspiring Leaders Program and the design team, yielding an 86% survey response rate. Based upon analysis of results, Morrison's (2005) mixed-method approach generated results supportive of the program. Participants expressed satisfaction with the process and revealed appreciation for collaborative meetings with leaders, universities, and education experts. District data revealed an increased pool of qualified applicants. Morrison (2005) suggested the implementation of similar programs due to their malleability to meet unique district needs.

A second study (Miracle, 2006) was conducted based on training initiatives implemented in North Carolina. There, the district developed a two-part training program. The first program is referred to as Lead Academy, and the second part is known as Advanced Leadership Development Program functioning as a cohort model. This study yielded results varying from those reported by Morrison. In his mixed-method approach, Miracle (2006) evaluated the principal preparation program geared toward training assistant principals and central office personnel for the principalship. This smaller study consisting of 18 participants and 37 nonparticipants was conducted in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District. Miracle (2006) discovered that participants felt inadequately prepared to implement a school-wide instructional program and that there was no significant difference in the leadership practices of participating individuals compared to nonparticipating individuals. Overall rating of the training program was deemed successful in preparing future principals, but its effectiveness could be improved by equally highlighting all of the ISLLC standards.

The dissertation entitled *A Comprehensive Evaluation of a School System's Grow Your Own Principal Preparation Program* (Joseph, 2009) represents the first of several

studies examining the implementation of the Administrative and Supervisory Professional Growth System in a school district in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The district implemented its version of a grow your own program including 50 participants during the 2003-2004 school year and expanded to include additional school-based administrators and central office administrators in the following year. This system had administrators participating in a two-year program, followed by an internship, in a three-tiered structure: AP<sub>1</sub>, AP<sub>2</sub>, and AP<sub>3</sub>. Levels AP<sub>1</sub> and AP<sub>2</sub> found candidates filling administrative vacancies, attending monthly meetings, and working with a mentor on completion of a portfolio in which proficiency of district standards were met. Upon successful completion of the A<sub>2</sub> program, administrators received invitations to engage in a four-week internship whereby full principalship duties were inherited, and interview training was received.

The program's emphasis on reflective practices during monthly seminars received mixed reviews. While some administrators appreciated the time to share experiences with colleagues, others viewed it as a waste of time since discussion replaced the teaching of applicable skills. According to participants, strong program points were identified as (a) collegiality through reflective practice; (b) cohort model promoting trusting relationships and networking; (c) mentoring relationships with practicing principals; and (d) familiarization with district policies. Negativity centered on a (a) poor applicant pool of candidates and selection policy; (b) lack of input regard monthly meeting agendas; (c) inadequate training of principals to serve as mentors; and (d) program design was criticized as merely adequate in its content and implementation. Recommendations for future programs include: (a) tougher entrance standards to be accompanied by an extensive portfolio; (b) mentor selection based on a voluntary basis, rather than chosen by

administrative vacancies at schools; and (c) partnerships with graduate school to ensure challenging course content and meaningful internship experiences. According to Joseph (2009),

The findings indicated that the secondary leadership development program increased the quantity of principal candidates within the school district, and participants of the program perceived themselves to have moderately high levels of leadership behaviors. In addition, the school system needed to establish clearer, more objective criteria to determine the degree to which the program improved principal candidates' quality. The program did help participants understand the administrative culture of the school system. Another finding was that the program was cost effective. Inconsistencies were found with the implementation of the program's components, which required a more collaborative, systematic approach to address. The scope of the program, access to executive staff members, cohort groups of study, and the developmental team meeting were identified as strengths of the program. The content of monthly seminars, communication between the program and stakeholders, and the professional development meetings were identified as areas of the program that needed improvement. (p. vii)

Regarding the results, Joseph (2010) adds:

The findings from this study reaffirmed the need for an extended amount of time for an internship experience and a quality experience during the internship period regardless of whether the internship occurs prior to or after an administrative experience is obtained. (p. 6)

### *A Louisiana School District's Administrative Preparation Programs*

One large school district in southeastern Louisiana, consisting of 56 schools, has identified and responded to the critical shortage of qualified leadership applicants. This school district employs over 5,400 personnel and services approximately 37,000 students. Twenty-five of the district's 56 schools are labeled Title I schools. Specifically, 17 elementary schools, four middle schools, and four junior high schools fit into this category. There are currently no Title I high schools in the district. According to the Louisiana Department of Education (2011b), the district's students are ethnically diverse, with a 25.5% minority population, accompanied by a 46.7% free/reduced lunch rate. Additionally, the district ranks 9<sup>th</sup> of the 69 Louisiana districts for teacher pay, with the average teacher salary, without added compensation, totaling \$52,163 (Louisiana Department of Education, 2011a). The district attempted to produce high-quality educational leaders well-versed in policy and administrative skills by means of alternative programs similar to those reported in studies by Morrison (2005), Miracle (2006), and Joseph (2009). Two distinct programs were designed by central office staff to inform and train prospective administrators in all areas of educational leadership uniquely relevant to the district.

#### *LEAD Academy*

The first program is called Leading Effective Administrative Development, also referred to as the LEAD Academy. Participation in the LEAD Academy is open to all district employees aspiring to become future leaders. Monthly in-services are held in which attendees learn the ins and outs of school management. Meetings serve to familiarize participants with district policies, allowing participants to consider if they are interested in formally pursuing a leadership role. Led by central office supervisors, topics

vary to cover all areas impacting school leaders. Participants are exposed to topics from an administrative perspective that they would normally not encounter while functioning in their daily teaching roles. Topics include: (a) human resources; (b) facilities management; (c) crisis prevention and intervention; (d) teacher evaluations; (e) school-community relations; (f) union contracts; (g) disciplinary proceedings; (h) public school finance; (i) legal issues; (j) professional development; (k) teacher certification; (l) sexual harassment; and (m) special education programs. Each session also offers rich discussion facilitated by the question-and-answer forum whereby participants address members of a panel. Panelists typically include current school administrators and/or Central Office personnel. Part of the program includes an informal internship component, allowing participants to shadow practicing leaders and perform light administrative duties alongside them for a specified number of hours.

#### *Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program*

The second program is called Parish-wide Assistant Principals (PWAP) and has been in existence for the past seven years. The PWAP program is aligned with the grow your own philosophy and has a more intense focus than that of the LEAD Academy. It consists of either a one-or two-year internship during which participants rotate to different schools each quarter, performing any and all duties specified by the site-based principal. If circumstances dictate an acting administrator to take a leave of absence, the superintendent may call for a PWAP to fill the position. Otherwise, site placement is based on administrative need by specific locations. These administrative positions are limited to approximately six applicants per year. Participants' teaching positions are held until the internship expires, at which time the participant either obtains a permanent administrative placement or returns to the position held prior to program entry. Interested

parties must apply through the human resources department to request an interview upon advertisement of the position. Once selected by the central office team consisting of the superintendent, assistant superintendents, supervisors, and school board members, the member is classified as a district administrator. As assistant principals, participants gain valuable field experience and attend monthly meetings with program coordinators and fellow PWAPs. Attendance at monthly meetings is mandatory and is considered an essential element of professional growth. Roundtable discussions provide a forum for advice seeking and information sharing. The PWAP program enables participants to actively serve in an administrative capacity while learning from veteran administrators. Since the induction of the program in 2002, all but two PWAPs have been placed in permanent administrative assignments.

DeRoche (2010) conducted a program evaluation of the PWAP program's merit based on its objectives of providing leaders with knowledge of district policies in areas of school-based management and instruction. In a dissertation entitled *Lack of Qualified Principal Candidates: An Evaluation of a Parish-Wide Assistant Principal Program*, DeRoche (2010) determined program worthiness by the degree to which a statistically significant relationship existed between administrative internships and the production of a pool of qualified candidates equipped with skills to effectively lead schools. Demographic data obtained indicated a majority of subjects surveyed had more than 16 years of educational experience, and approximately 50% were between the ages of 51 and 60 years. Twenty-four of the 28 former participants of the PWAP program completed an online survey, representing an 86% response rate. Results indicated that the majority of participants (71%) spent one year in the program, while (29%) spent two years in the program. Permanent job placement post-PWAP program indicated that approximately

25% of participants became employed in the high school setting, with the remainder of participants gaining employment at elementary, middle, and junior high schools.

Research questions reflected PWAP program objectives in three domains: school management, assessment, and curriculum and instruction. DeRoche (2010) further describes the structure of the study by attributes:

Each domain consisted of four attributes addressing (a) the extent to which the participants felt knowledgeable about each domain (b) the extent to which the participants had opportunities applying their knowledge in a domain (c) the extent to which the participants felt qualified to handle responsibilities related to a domain, and (d) the extent to which the PWAP program affected their perception of their qualifications in each domain. (p. 76)

Program strengths and weaknesses were identified in two areas based on analysis of survey statistics. Results indicated competency with knowledge acquisition; however, participants indicated a lesser degree of confidence with application of knowledge. In the area of assessment, participants felt qualified to handle assessment responsibilities ( $M = 3.52$ ) but not the *application* of assessment ( $M = 3.10$ ). In the area of curriculum and instruction, participants felt confident in their knowledge of curriculum and instruction (3.50) but not the *application* of curriculum and instruction ( $M = 3.04$ ).

Data obtained via statistical analyses revealed participants feeling knowledgeable and qualified in each domain and attribute overall. Participants felt qualified to handle job responsibilities and attributed their confidence to the PWAP program experience.

## Summary

Research into educational leadership has grown substantially in recent decades. This represents further justification for conducting the current study. Dissatisfaction with the state of education in America, brought to the forefront by national reports published during educational reforms in the 1980s, called attention to the number of inefficient educational leaders in the nation. To this end, critics, practitioners, policy makers, and universities began to re-examine the structure of principal preparedness programs in determining readiness of school leaders. The research presented here is indicative of a faulty training system and represents the need for an overhaul of preparation programs, beginning at the university level. In light of a nationwide principal shortage and dwindling pool of qualified candidates, districts have begun to create and implement their own administrative preparation programs. This review of literature examined a number of alternatives to traditional training models and several case studies modeling the Grow Your Own concept. Insufficient evidence exists regarding district-wide efforts to develop in-house principal preparation programs for the training of potential leaders, thus forming the basis of this study.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Overview

With increased accountability and pressure for school improvement, the number of candidates interested in pursuing educational leadership positions is deficient. Principal retirement rates, strenuous demands, career alternatives, and growing districts are contributing to the diminishing applicant pool (Bingham & Gottfried, 2003). Training initiatives have become an important consideration for school districts, which are focusing on methods to attract and retain educational leaders. This study intends to reveal whether educational leaders who engage in district level training initiatives experience a higher level of preparedness for the job than administrators who do not engage in district level training initiatives. This Chapter details the quantitative research design used to determine perceived levels of administrative preparedness, as well as the methods and procedures used to investigate the research questions. The participants in the study are identified, and an analysis and description of the instrument utilized in the study is presented. Instrumentation is described in terms of the development of the survey, survey items, response scales, and scoring interpretation. Procedures for data collection are described, and limitations of the study are discussed. Finally, the reliability, validity, and analysis of the data for the study are explained.

#### Research Design

The purpose of the study was to determine educational leaders' reported levels of preparedness for administrative positions. Using a quantitative design, this research addressed participants' perceived proficiency in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction. These three areas will be referred to as domains.

Within each domain, participants were asked to identify their perceived level of preparedness across several attributes. A survey questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed to acquire data from a set of district-wide school administrators. “Surveys have broad appeal, particularly in democratic cultures, because they are perceived as a reflection of the attitudes, preferences, and opinions of the very people from whom the society’s policy makers derive their mandate” (Rea & Parker, 1992, p. 1). The encouragement of anonymous participation is beneficial to the integrity of responses because it “will increase your chances of receiving responses that genuinely represent a person’s beliefs or feelings” (Henerson, Morris, & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987, p. 28).

The following research questions and hypotheses were the focus of this study:

#### Research Questions

- RQ1 To what degree does participation in the district’s leadership preparation initiatives determine preparedness of school administrators?
- RQ2 How does the level of preparedness compare between administrators who participated in district training initiatives versus administrators who did not participate in district training initiatives in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction?

#### Research Hypotheses

- H<sub>1</sub> There was no statistically significant association between administrators’ participation in leadership preparation training and leadership preparedness.
- H<sub>2</sub> There was no statistically significant association between administrators’ participation in district training initiatives compared to administrators not participating in district training initiatives in determining leadership

preparedness in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction.

### Participants

Participants represent a clustered, voluntary sample consisting of current principals and assistant principals in a large southeastern Louisiana school district. In the 2011-2012 school year, 137 school administrators in the district hold leadership positions in one of 56 schools and two alternative school sites. Of these, nine are high school principals, 22 are high school assistant principals, 13 are junior high principals, 16 are junior high assistant principals, eight are middle school principals, 10 are middle school assistant principals, 26 are elementary school principals, 24 are elementary school assistant principals, and four are administrators at two alternative school sites. The researcher estimated a 75% survey response rate.

### Instrumentation

The instrument employed in the study, which consisted of two distinct sections, served to collect participants' demographic information, as well as their perceived level of administrative preparedness. It was reviewed for content validity by a panel of three experts and was pilot tested. The panel of experts is composed of a central office supervisor in charge of curriculum and instruction who has earned a PhD, a high school principal currently enrolled in a doctoral program in educational leadership, and a high school assistant principal who recently completed a doctoral program in educational leadership. All expert panelists have personally engaged in statistical research. All panel members agreed that the format of the survey and its scoring reflect the purpose for which the study was being conducted.

Section I solicits demographic information from the sample population. Items were chosen to provide a description of the subjects, allowing analysis of characteristics comprising the district administrative pool. Participants placed check marks in front of appropriate responses to status measures categorized by gender, grade level of school where administrative position is currently held, number of years as an administrator, highest level of education obtained, participation in leadership preparation programs, and years ago training was received.

Section II consists of a five-point Likert Scale asking participants to report levels of preparedness within three domains, which are further broken down into subsets of attributes. The areas of preparedness identified were derived from the review of literature, as well as leadership competencies addressed within the district's training programs. Responses to the items are scaled from "1" being "least prepared" to "5" being "most prepared."

The three domains are (a) School Management; (b) Leading Change; and (c) Curriculum and Instruction. Within the School Management domain, six attributes exist: (a) Finances; (b) Crisis Management; (c) Legal Issues; (d) Discipline; (e) Facilities Management; and (f) Staffing/Recruiting Personnel. Within the Leading Change domain, five attributes exist: (a) Improving School Climate/Culture; (b) Shared Decision-Making; (c) Developing and Communicating Shared Vision; (d) Community Involvement; and (e) Developing the School Improvement Plan. Within the Curriculum and Instruction domain, six attributes exist: (a) Providing Effective Staff Professional Development; (b) Engaging Staff in Standards and Curriculum Development; (c) Use of Assessments and Data; (d) Providing Instructional Feedback; (e) Evaluating Current and New Programs; and (f) Observing and Evaluating Staff Performance.

Three sets of scores were computed from the survey questionnaire results. The first was attribute scores within each domain. The six attributes measuring perceived preparation level in the school management domain were averaged individually to determine the scores for each attribute. Similarly, those attributes in the domains of leading change and curriculum and instruction were individually averaged to obtain scores in each of those attributes.

A second set of scores was calculated for all domains. These scores were calculated by averaging all items within a domain, regardless of attribute. For example, in the school management domain, the attribute scores for finances, crisis management, legal issues, discipline, facilities management, and staffing and recruiting personnel were averaged together to determine a score for the school management domain. Similarly, attribute scores in the leading change domain were averaged together to determine a score for the leading change domain. Also, attribute scores in the curriculum and instruction domain were averaged together to determine a score for the curriculum and instruction domain.

A third set of scores were calculated and reported by groups. Five distinct groups of administrators were compared: (a) those who participated in the LEAD Academy; (b) those who participated in the Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program; (c) those who participated in both the Lead Academy and the Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program; (d) those who did not participate in either district training initiative; and (e) those who obtained out-of-district training. These scores were calculated and averaged by both attribute and domain.

## Procedures

Following review of the expert panel, as well as IRB approval (Appendix B), a pilot study consisting of 15 central office supervisors was conducted. This sample population consisted of participants who have previously served as school administrators within the southeastern Louisiana school district being studied. Survey research techniques were used to determine the perceptions of Louisiana public school administrators regarding the level of preparedness to fulfill administrative positions based on participation, or nonparticipation in district leadership preparation initiatives.

Perceived level of preparation information was obtained by using an instrument consisting of a five-point Likert scale. The survey questionnaire (Appendix A), a letter of introduction to the superintendent requesting permission to conduct the survey (Appendix C), and a letter requesting building-level administrators to participate in the study (Appendix D) was mailed to the superintendent of the southeastern Louisiana school district being studied. Upon approval, the letter requesting participation in the study was sent via email to the pilot study participants. All email addresses were obtained through the school district's web site and interoffice communication system. Based upon instructions given in the letter, pilot study participants accessed Survey Monkey to complete the anonymous survey from which the researcher obtained responses and analyzed results for assurance of instrumentation reliability. Results confirmed the instrument's reliability via the Cronbach's alpha test. A minimum score of .70 was used to deem domains reliable. For the school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction domains, the Cronbach's alpha scores were .57, .79, and .81 respectively. Due to the low reliability score of the school management domain, the researcher interpreted these results with caution. To conduct the actual study, the letter of

introduction and survey questionnaire were sent via email to all administrators within the school district. A link to the electronic survey questionnaire and specific instructions were provided within the text of the e-mail. At the end of the first two-week period, an insufficient response rate was received from the electronic surveys. Email reminders were then sent bi-weekly to administrators at each school within the district until an acceptable response rate was obtained.

### Data Analysis

The results of the research questions were reviewed through two sets of analyses, descriptive and inferential. Research Question 1 examined the degree to which participation in district training initiatives determined levels of leadership preparedness. For Research Question 1, descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, and number of subject responses) for attribute and domain scores were calculated. Research Question 2 compared perceived levels of leadership preparedness between administrators who participated in district-wide training initiatives and administrators who did not participate in district-wide training initiatives. To address Research Question 2, the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was utilized to calculate averages since several groups were being compared. More than one dependent variable was used. Frequency counts were conducted, and Research Questions were tested for statistical significance at an alpha level of .05 to control for the probability of Type I errors.

### Summary

This Chapter has outlined the methods and procedures of the study. The beginning of the Chapter dealt with a description of the research design and participants. These subjects were selected because of their current status as either a principal or assistant principal in the Louisiana school district being studied. Data collection spanned

a two-month period and utilized an online survey questionnaire which solicited participants' demographic information and their perceived levels of administrative preparedness across the domains of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction.



## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this Chapter is to present results obtained from the analyses of data collected in the study, which investigated the effectiveness of district training programs in determining levels of leadership preparedness in school administrators. Chapter IV is divided into four sections. The first section describes demographic information relative to the administrators, both principals and assistant principals, who participated in the study. The second section explains the descriptive statistics obtained from responses to the questionnaire. The third section reveals results of the statistical tests utilized to address the Research Questions and Hypotheses. The fourth section summarizes findings from the analysis of data. This Chapter describes the results and statistical findings of the study.

#### Demographic Data

Fifty-six schools exist in the large, southeastern Louisiana district studied, which employs 135 administrators in elementary, middle, junior high, and high schools. All 135 practicing administrators received an email letter inviting them to participate in the online survey. They were provided a link to access the survey via Survey Monkey, as well as explicit instructions for completing the survey. A second email was sent out as a reminder after an initial two-week period. Data analyses are based upon the 76 responses received. This yielded a response rate of 56.3%.

Responses to the anonymous survey generated demographic information from the participants. Respondents were asked to provide information on: (a) gender; (b) grade level of the school at which they serve as an administrator; (c) number of years they have served as an assistant principal, principal, or both; (d) highest level of education acquired;

(e) whether they earned traditional or alternative certification; (f) how many years ago training was received; and (g) the district leadership training initiative in which they participated. Frequency data for the 76 administrator participants can be located in Tables 1, 2, and 5.

The majority (67%) of the 76 participants in this study were female. Of the 76 participants, 25% were elementary school administrators, 16% were middle school administrators, 24% were junior high school administrators, and 35% were high school administrators. The majority (82%) of the participants received traditional certification, as opposed to only 18% receiving alternative certification. In terms of the highest level of education obtained, 47% earned a master's degree, 41% earned a master's +30, 5% earned a specialist degree, and 7% earned a doctorate degree. This information, as well as additional demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Frequencies for Administrator Characteristics of Study Participants (N=76)*

Variables	Levels	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender	Male	25	32.9
	Female	51	67.1
School Level	Elementary	19	25.0
	Middle	12	15.8
	Junior High	18	23.7
	High	27	35.5

Table 1 (continued).

Variables	Levels	Frequencies	Percentages
Highest Degree Earned	Master's	36	47.4
	Master's +30	31	40.8
	Specialist	4	5.3
	Doctorate	5	6.6
Certification	Traditional	62	81.6
	Alternative	14	18.4
Years Ago Training Received	0-5	29	38.2
	6-10	31	40.8
	11-15	9	11.8
	16-20	6	7.9
	21-25	1	1.3

Of the 76 participants, 24% report serving as an assistant principal, either previously or currently, and 26% report serving as a principal. The number of years of experience as an assistant principal ranges from 0 to 18, while the number of years of experience as a principal ranges from 0 to 20. In the assistant principal category, 59% of respondents possess between one and three years of experience. The highest number of respondents (10.9%) serving as principal possess only one year of experience. This information is reported in Table 2.

Table 2

*Frequencies for Years of Administrative Experience (N=76)*

Variables	Years	Frequencies	Percentages
Assistant Principal	0	5	6.6
	1	14	18.4
	2	20	26.3
	3	11	14.5
	4	4	5.3
	5	5	6.6
	6	7	9.2
	7	5	6.6
	8	1	1.3
	9	2	2.6
	16	1	1.3
	18	1	1.3
Principal	0	30	39.5
	1	8	10.5
	2	5	6.6
	3	7	9.2
	4	6	7.9
	5	5	6.6

Table 2 (continued).

Variables	Years	Frequencies	Percentages
	6	3	3.9
	7	2	2.6
	8	1	1.3
	9	3	3.9
	10	2	2.6
	11	1	1.3
	12	1	1.3
	15	1	1.3
	20	1	1.3

Within the school district studied, employees can voluntarily elect to participate in the Leading Effective Administrative Development (LEAD) Academy, the Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program, or both. The survey instrument also allowed for selecting the responses, “neither district initiative,” or “out-of-district training.” Participation in either district initiative is not a prerequisite for seeking an administrative position within the school district. The results of program participation are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

*Frequencies of Participation in District Leadership Initiatives by Administrators (N=76)*

Variables	Levels	Frequencies	Percentages
Program Participation	LEAD Academy	24	31.6
	Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program	16	21.1
	Both Initiatives	13	17.1
	Neither Initiative	18	23.7
	Out-of-District Training	5	6.6

#### Descriptive Statistics

The online survey questionnaire solicited administrators to respond to a series of questions related to their perceived levels of preparedness to serve in school leadership positions. The survey consisted of seventeen (17) questions, which were categorized into three domains: school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction. Each of the three domains is further divided into attributes. The 17 questions use a Likert-type response scale to measure administrators' beliefs regarding their levels of administrative preparedness. The Likert-type response scale was a five-point scale, whereby a score of one represented "least prepared," and a score of five represented "most prepared."

Within the School Management domain, administrators were asked to rate their levels of preparedness across six attributes: (a) Finances; (b) Crisis Management; (c) Legal Issues; (d) Discipline; (e) Facilities Management; and (f) Staffing/Recruiting

Personnel. Questions in this domain focus on an administrator's ability to effectively and efficiently manage daily school operations. As illustrated in Table 4, the school management domain is the one in which administrators perceive themselves to be least prepared, as indicated by the lowest average with the largest standard deviation for this subscale. Specifically, administrators classified themselves as being least prepared in the area of school finances.

Within the Leading Change domain, administrators were asked to rate their levels of preparedness across five attributes: (a) Improving School Climate/Culture; (b) Shared Decision-Making; (c) Developing and Communicating Shared Vision; (d) Community Involvement; and (e) Developing the School Improvement Plan. Questions in this domain focus on an administrator's ability to engage in effective communication with the faculty and staff, as well as the community. Scores in this domain, as indicated in Table 6, illustrate that administrators feel somewhat prepared in this area.

Within the Curriculum and Instruction domain, administrators were asked to rate their levels of preparedness across six attributes: (a) Providing Effective Staff Professional Development; (b) Engaging Staff in Standards and Curriculum Development; (c) Use of Assessments and Data; (d) Providing Instructional Feedback; (e) Evaluating Current and New Programs; and (f) Observing and Evaluating Staff Performance. Questions in this domain focus on an administrator's ability to perform in an instructional leadership capacity. The questions encompass early planning stages to final instructional delivery, as administrators intervene in all areas of curriculum and instruction through interactions with both teachers and students daily. Administrators deem themselves most competent in the curriculum and instruction domain, with scores ranging from 2.5 to 5.0 and  $M = 3.91$ . For the school management and leading change

domains,  $M = 3.89$  and  $M = 3.23$ , respectfully. Table 4 indicates the highest average scores in this domain.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Administrators' Levels of Administrative Preparedness (N=76)*

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
School Management (Items Q8a – Q8f)	2.00	4.67	3.23	.54
Leading Change (Items Q9a – Q9e)	2.20	5.00	3.89	.66
Curriculum and Instruction (Items Q10a – Q10f)	2.50	5.00	3.91	.70

Note: Scores ranged from 1 = least prepared to 5 = most prepared.

#### Statistical Tests

The variables studied were the domains of leadership preparedness (school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction) of K-12 school principals and assistant principals. Their perceived levels of preparedness across each domain and its related attributes were specifically investigated. The data were analyzed in order to respond to two Research Questions and their related Hypotheses.

RQ1 To what degree does participation in the district's leadership preparation initiatives determine preparedness of school administrators?

H<sub>1</sub> There was no statistically significant association between administrators' participation in leadership preparation training and leadership preparedness.



To address research question 1, descriptive statistics for attribute and domain scores were calculated. As a result, the means, standard deviations, and number of subject responses were revealed. In the school management domain, finances appears to be the area in which administrators feel least prepared ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = .54$ ), regardless of their participation in preparation programs. Likewise, in the curriculum and instruction domain, observing and evaluating staff performance appears to be the area in which administrators feel most prepared ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = .79$ ). Participation in district leadership preparation initiatives does not seem to impact the preparedness levels of administrators. Participants appear to experience strengths and weaknesses in the same areas, regardless of participation in leadership training initiatives. Table 5 illustrates these results.

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics for Levels of Administrative Preparedness across Domains and Attributes (N=76)*

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>School Management</i>	2.00	4.67	3.23	.54
Finances	1.00	5.00	1.99	1.10
Crisis Management	1.00	5.00	3.08	.94
Legal Issues	1.00	5.00	2.58	1.09
Discipline	2.00	5.00	4.34	.81
Facilities Management	1.00	5.00	3.62	.92
Staffing/Recruiting	1.00	5.00	3.80	.99

Table 5 (continued).

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>Leading Change</i>	2.20	5.00	3.89	.66
Improving School Culture	1.00	5.00	3.74	1.11
Shared Decision-Making	2.00	5.00	3.91	.79
Developing and Communicating Shared Vision	2.00	5.00	3.99	.79
Community Involvement	2.00	5.00	3.67	.93
Developing School Improvement Plan	1.00	5.00	4.13	1.19
<i>Curriculum and Instruction</i>	2.50	5.00	3.91	.70
Providing Staff Professional Development	2.00	5.00	3.79	.88
Engaging Staff in Standards and Curriculum Development	1.00	5.00	3.57	.97
Use of Assessment and Data	1.00	5.00	3.46	1.23
Providing Instructional Feedback	3.00	5.00	4.41	.70
Evaluating Current/New Programs	1.00	5.00	3.68	.93
Observing and Evaluating Staff Performance	2.00	5.00	4.53	.79

Note: Scores range from 1 = least prepared to 5 = most prepared

The pool of administrators surveyed was not simply comprised of administrators receiving district training or no training. A small population of five (7%) administrators received out-of-district training. These study participants have entered the district's administrative population already possessing a previously attained level of preparedness.

Administrators who received out-of-district training scored higher in the domain of school management ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) than administrators participating in the district's LEAD Academy ( $M = 3.24$ ,  $SD = .49$ ) and Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program ( $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = .62$ ). Administrators who received out-of-district training also scored higher in the domain of leading change ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = .36$ ) than administrators participating in the district's LEAD Academy ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) and Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = .55$ ). However, in the domain of curriculum and instruction, administrators receiving out-of-district training scored lower ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ) than administrators participating in the district's LEAD Academy ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = .64$ ) and Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program ( $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = .71$ ). Table 6 illustrates these results.

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for Subgroups of Preparation Initiatives (N=76)*

Variables	Preparation Programs	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>n</i>
<i>School Management</i>				
	LEAD Academy	3.24	.49	24
	Parish-Wide Asst. Principal	3.38	.62	16
	Both	2.92	.38	13
	Neither	3.25	.55	18
	Out-of-District	3.53	.75	5
	Total	3.23	.54	76

Table 6 (continued).

Variables	Preparation Programs	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>n</i>
<i>Leading Change</i>				
	LEAD Academy	3.86	.80	24
	Parish-Wide Asst. Principal	3.96	.55	16
	Both	3.72	.60	13
	Neither	3.92	.69	18
	Out-of-District	4.08	.36	5
	Total	3.89	.66	76
<i>Curriculum and Instruction</i>				
	LEAD Academy	4.10	.64	24
	Parish-Wide Asst. Principal	3.97	.71	16
	Both	3.67	.65	13
	Neither	3.76	.63	18
	Out-of-District	3.90	1.21	5
	Total	3.91	.70	76

Note: Scores range from 1 = least prepared to 5 = most prepared

To address Hypothesis 1, the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was utilized to calculate averages since there was a comparison between groups. Comparisons were made between administrators who participated in the LEAD Academy, Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program, both LEAD Academy and Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program, out-of-district training, or neither training initiative. Administrative level of preparedness does not significantly differ between the groups. Results indicate that there

is no statistically significant difference in administrative preparedness levels. The null hypothesis was accepted based on statistical results of the Pillai's Trace test, which report  $F(12, 213) = 1.211, p = .277$ .

RQ2 How does the level of preparedness compare between administrators who participated in district training initiatives versus administrators who did not participate in district training initiatives in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction?

H<sub>2</sub> There was no statistically significant association between administrators' participation in district training initiatives compared to administrators not participating in district training initiatives in determining leadership preparedness in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction.

For Research Question 2, descriptive statistics for attribute and domain scores were calculated. As a result, the means, standard deviations, and number of subject responses were revealed. For the school management domain, results showed levels of preparedness of participants in district training initiatives to be slightly lower ( $M = 3.20, SD = .52$ ) than administrators who did not participate in district training initiatives ( $M = 3.31, SD = .59$ ). For the leading change domain, scores for district training participants were lower ( $M = 3.86, SD = .68$ ) than non-district training participants ( $M = 3.96, SD = .63$ ). For the curriculum and instruction domain, scores for district training participants were higher ( $M = 3.96, SD = .68$ ) than non-district training participants ( $M = 3.79, SD = .76$ ). Members of the district-trained administrators group were not better prepared to assume the role of educational leader than the non-district trained administrators in the domains of school management and leading change. Table 7 illustrates these results:

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics for Levels of Administrative Preparedness across Domains in District-Trained versus Non-District Trained Administrators (N=76)*

Variables	District	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>n</i>
<i>School Management</i>	In district	3.20	.52	53
	Not in district	3.31	.59	23
	Total	3.23	.54	76
<i>Leading Change</i>	In district	3.86	.68	53
	Not in district	3.96	.63	23
	Total	3.89	.66	76
<i>Curriculum and Instruction</i>	In district	3.96	.68	53
	Not in district	3.79	.76	23
	Total	3.90	.70	76

Note: Scores range from 1 = least prepared to 5 = most prepared

To address Hypothesis 2, the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was utilized to calculate averages since there was a comparison between groups. Comparisons were made between administrators who participated in district training initiatives versus administrators who did not participate in district training initiatives. Administrative level of preparedness does not appear to be impacted by participation in district training initiatives. Results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in administrative preparedness levels between the two groups. The null hypothesis was accepted based on statistical results of the Pillai's Trace test, which report  $F(3, 72) = 1.677, p = .180$ .

### Summary

This study investigated whether there are significant differences in levels of administrative preparedness by leaders who participated in district training initiatives, compared to those who did not. The data presented in this chapter reported the perceived levels of preparedness of school administrators to assume leadership positions. Levels of preparedness were examined and linked to participation or non-participation in district leadership preparation programs. Participation in preparation programs, in general, versus district training initiatives was also compared. Data analyses indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of preparedness between administrators who participated in leadership preparation programs compared to non-participants. There was also no statistical significance in preparedness levels of district-trained administrators compared to non-district trained administrators.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of district-wide training initiatives on determining preparedness of educational leaders. The study investigated the degree to which participation in district leadership preparation initiatives impacts preparedness of school administrators. The study further examined levels of administrative preparedness between administrators who participated in district leadership training initiatives compared to administrators who did not participate in district training initiatives. The intent of this research was to present findings that can be used in the development of effective district-wide training initiatives, as well as in the revision of existing leadership preparation programs in the large, southeastern school district studied. The intent of the research was also to produce findings that can be used to guide the development of training programs in additional Louisiana school districts. District leaders and school boards may deem this research useful when allocating funds for vital programs and assuring that administrators are knowledgeable in regard to specific district policies. Additionally, the information was intended to help current and aspiring principals and assistant principals recognize the significance of becoming well versed in leadership practices and district expectations. Further, results of the study can be applied to educational leadership training practices and policies throughout the United States, potentially influencing curricula and leadership training programs in post-secondary educational settings.



### Summary of Procedures

The primary data for this study were obtained from 76 principals and assistant principals surveyed from 56 schools in a southern Louisiana school district. For this quantitative study, the responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to address two Research Questions and the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to address the corresponding Hypotheses. Permission was granted from The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Adequate provisions were made to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain confidentiality of all data before a pilot study and actual study were conducted. Participants were emailed an introduction letter containing a link to access an anonymous online survey questionnaire. The letter also provided the guidelines of informed consent. Data were compiled and analyzed by the researcher, yielding Cronbach's alpha test scores of instrument reliability across the domains of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction.

### Conclusions and Discussions

Researchers attribute the diminishing pool of qualified applicants for educational leadership positions to increased retirement rates, expanding school districts, unrelenting job demands, and alternative career options. Lazaridou (2009) describes a worrisome principal succession crisis compounded by high-stakes accountability, elevated retirement and attrition rates, and ill preparedness to perform administrative duties. Owings et al. (2011) claim that completion of university programs in educational leadership does not automatically qualify candidates to be effective school administrators. Possessing administrative credentials is not the sole determining factor implying compatibility or readiness to lead schools. Pounder and Crow (2005) add that

university programs strongly focus on research-based leadership theories but fall short in preparing prospective administrators to meet the daily demands of school administration. In response to these issues, school districts are compelled to develop programs that will train candidates with school leadership potential. Concurrently, existing leadership training models need to be critiqued and revised to align with the needs of aspiring and acting administrators.

The recruitment and retention of qualified leaders is critical to school improvement and students' academic performance. The degree of advanced training, in the form of mentorships, internships, inductions, and in-services, may serve to reduce principal attrition rates and produce competent school leaders capable of effectively leading schools. According to Marzano et al. (2005), educational leadership directly impacts student achievement, as well as the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of daily school operations. Fernandez et al. (2007) report a correlation between principal tenure and student performance, and Rice (2010) describes principal tenure's positive impact on student attendance and math achievement. Owings et al. (2011) reported student achievement gains to be lower in schools with high principal turnover. They also describe higher teacher attrition rates in schools in which the principal has served for only a short time. Further, with greater expectations for standardized test performance, school safety, school-community relations, financial procedures, advanced technology, and revised roles of principals and assistant principals, extensive proficiency in instructional and management areas is required to build a positive public perception and school climate.

In an effort to expand upon the literature indicating a nationwide principal shortage and the linkage of administrative experience to student success, this study investigated the perceived effectiveness of district-wide training initiatives on

determining levels of leadership preparedness in educational leaders. Data collected via survey responses from principals and assistant principals were analyzed in order to address the variables of leadership preparedness (school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction). Responses obtained addressed the following Research Questions and research Hypotheses:

RQ1 To what degree does participation in the district's leadership preparation initiatives determine preparedness of school administrators?

H<sub>1</sub> There was no statistically significant association between administrators' participation in leadership preparation training and leadership preparedness.

RQ2 How does the level of preparedness compare between administrators who participated in district training initiatives versus administrators who did not participate in district training initiatives in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction?

H<sub>2</sub> There was no statistically significant association between administrators' participation in district training initiatives compared to administrators not participating in district training initiatives in determining leadership preparedness in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction.

The major findings in this study indicate that, while district-trained administrators reported relatively high scores overall, there is room for improvement within some domains. Participants in district leadership training initiatives did not report higher levels of administrative preparedness than non-district trained administrators in the domains of school management and leading change. However, curriculum and instruction appears to be the domain in which district-trained administrators feel strongest.

As stated in Research Question one, tests were conducted to determine the degree of preparedness based on participation in district leadership training initiatives. The variable studied was program participation, and responses from five distinct groups were examined: LEAD Academy, Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program, both initiatives, neither initiative, and out-of-district training. There was no statistically significant association between administrators' participation in leadership preparation training and leadership preparedness.

Overall, the school management domain reported lowest preparedness levels by all groups surveyed. This domain represents the area in which administrators deem themselves least prepared. It is also the area in which the lowest reliability was reported, indicating that this domain consists of different types of skills and, therefore, may not have been accurately measured. The curriculum and instruction domain reported highest preparedness levels by all groups surveyed. This domain represents the area in which administrators deem themselves most prepared. The leading change domain revealed scores falling between the school management and the curriculum and instruction domains. These results reveal that levels of preparedness were not significantly impacted by participation in district training initiatives. All participants reported perceived levels of preparedness to be consistent across the three domains, regardless of training received.

Within the school management domain, administrators perceived themselves to be most prepared in the area of discipline, followed by staffing and recruiting of personnel. They perceived themselves to be least prepared in the area of school finances, followed closely by legal issues.

Within the leading change domain, administrators perceived themselves to be most prepared in the area of developing the school improvement plan, followed by

developing and communicating a shared vision. They perceived themselves to be least prepared in the area of community involvement, followed by improving school culture.

Within the curriculum and instruction domain, administrators perceived themselves to be most prepared in the area of observing and evaluating staff performance, followed by providing instructional feedback. They perceived themselves to be least prepared in the use of assessment and data, followed by engaging staff in standards and curriculum development.

As stated in Research Question two, tests were conducted to determine how the level of preparedness compares between administrators who participated in district training initiatives versus administrators who did not participate in district training initiatives in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction. There was no statistically significant association between participants in district training initiatives compared to nonparticipants in determining leadership preparedness in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction. While district-trained administrators perceive their levels of preparedness to be strong in the curriculum and instruction domain, both the school management and leading change domains are areas in need of improvement.

With standard deviation scores considered, perceived levels of preparedness were relatively consistent between district-trained administrators and non-district trained administrators across all three domains. Both groups experienced the lowest scores in the school management domain. However, the district-trained administrators reported highest levels of preparedness in the curriculum and instruction domain, while non-district trained administrators reported highest levels of preparedness in the leading change domain. Non-district trained administrators perceived their levels of preparedness to be

minimally higher in the school management and leading change domains than the district-trained administrators.

District-trained participants reported varied levels of preparedness across the three domains. LEAD Academy participants reported higher levels of preparedness in the curriculum and instruction domain. Participants in the Parish-wide Assistant Principal Program reported higher levels of preparedness in both the school management and leading change domains.

### Limitations

Several factors may limit this study's findings. The scope of the study was to determine the effectiveness of district training initiatives in determining levels of preparedness of educational leaders in a large, southeastern Louisiana school district. The findings presented may not be generalized to all school districts. Some school districts may not offer training beyond that which was received at the university level. A small percentage (6.6%) of the participants had already obtained administrative training from out-of-district sources prior to securing district administrative positions. Information regarding the extent of out-of-district training received was unavailable to the researcher. The population of participants surveyed was restricted to practicing administrators within the district being studied. Some administrators may have received training many years ago, compromising accuracy of perceived initial preparedness levels. Subsequent leadership training over the years may have interfered or replaced initial feelings of ill preparedness. The reliability of reported scores in the school management domain is questionable. A Cronbach's alpha score of .70 determines reliability; however, in the school management domain, a score of only .57 was obtained. This indicates that the

school management domain contained a variety of skills, which could have been measured separately for better accuracy.

### Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Current educational research on preparing highly qualified educational leaders discussed methods by which districts are trying to fill positions left vacant by the critical principal shortage. Robbins and Alvy (2009) stress the importance of educational leaders engaging in lifelong learning to promote professional growth in the area of school leadership. District leaders can develop partnerships with neighboring districts to share ideas for program development and implementation. They can creatively develop training models focusing on preparing candidates to effectively lead schools. Alternative training programs should emphasize real-world problem solving, incorporating skills required to manage schools, lead change, and cultivate curriculum. District leaders can also seek the assistance of practicing principals to serve as panelists for forum discussions, lead simulations, role-play, and share experiences with administrative candidates. Veteran administrators can volunteer to serve as mentors for novice administrators and provide internships and job shadowing opportunities.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Despite an abundance of research in the area of leadership, current findings reveal opportunities to delve deeper into the value of educational leadership preparation. The following future studies could promote meaningful understanding of how and why school administrators should be trained:

1. Future studies should include multiple school districts which have implemented similar forms of leadership training.

2. Future studies should include participants who have obtained administrative training experience within a more recent and defined time frame.
3. Future studies should consider the type of out-of-district training to measure its alignment with the training offered by the district being studied.
4. Future studies should compare scope of the content presented via district-wide training to content presented through university coursework.
5. Future studies should compare initiatives offered within a district to determine which initiative best prepares administrators to effectively lead a school.
6. Future studies should compare levels of perceived preparedness based on the amount and types of district training received.
7. Future studies should track the progress of administrators to determine long-term leadership effectiveness, including promotions obtained, length of time serving as principal and/or assistant principal, and longevity in administrative positions.
8. Future studies should incorporate pre-tests and post-tests to measure levels of perceived preparedness.
9. Future studies should evaluate only those training models that are aligned with ISLLC standards.

### Summary

Aspiring and practicing administrators must be skillful and prepared to endure the multifaceted role of principal or assistant principal; it is through carefully designed training initiatives that administrative preparedness can occur. Locating qualified administrative candidates who are well trained to assume positions of educational leadership has become a nationwide burden. Districts have begun taking a proactive approach to the problem by developing programs and training administrators from within.



The effectiveness of one district's attempt at leadership preparation has been reported in this study. Current literature suggests that administrative candidates are exiting the university programs ill equipped to fulfill the role of educational leader. Results of this study indicate that additional district training received post university coursework has not made a significant difference in levels of administrative preparedness. Results of this research should guide the development of future leadership training initiatives to become reflective of the complexities of leadership. Information gained from this study will be useful in planning, implementing, and revising administrative training initiatives, as well as in supplementing current literature on educational leadership preparedness.

## APPENDIX A

### SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Survey Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to collect data from school administrators. The acquired information will be used to examine the effectiveness of district-wide training initiatives on determining levels of preparedness in educational leaders.

This survey is completely voluntary, and anonymity is guaranteed. You may discontinue participation in the study at any time, without penalty. Completion of the survey should take approximately 10 minutes. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which assures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

## Part I. Demographic Information

Select the answer that best represents your demographic information.

### 1. What is your gender?

☐ male

☐ female

### 2. Grade level of school at which you are an administrator:

☐ elementary school

☐ middle school

☐ junior high school

☐ high school

### 3. Number of years you have been an administrator: (include current year)

# years serving as Assistant

Principal

# years serving as Principal

### 4. What is your highest level of education?

☐ Master's Degree

☐ Master's +30

☐ Specialist Degree

☐ Doctorate Degree

### 5. Did you receive traditional certification or alternative certification?

☐ Traditional

☐ Alternative

### 6. Did you participate in either of the district's leadership preparation programs? If so, which ones? (Check all that apply, and include current year.)

☐ LEAD Academy

☐ Parish-wide Assistant  
Principal

☐ Neither district initiative

☐ Out-of-district training

### 7. How many years ago did you receive your training?

☐ 0-5

☐ 6-10

☐ 11-15

☐ 16-20

☐ 21-25

☐ 26-30

☐ 31-35

☐ 36-40

## Part II. Levels of Preparedness by Categories

For each area below, indicate the level of preparedness you felt in your first administrative position  
(1 = least prepared; 5 = most prepared)

### 8. School Management

	1 least prepared	2	3	4	5 most prepared
A. Finances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B. Crisis Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C. Legal Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D. Discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E. Facilities Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
F. Staffing/Recruiting Personnel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 9. Leading Change

	1 least prepared	2	3	4	5 most prepared
A. Improving School Climate/Culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B. Shared Decision-Making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C. Developing and Communicating Shared Vision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D. Community Involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E. Developing the School Improvement Plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 10. Curriculum and Instruction

	1 least prepared	2	3	4	5 most prepared
A. Providing Effective Staff Professional Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B. Engaging Staff in Standards/Curriculum Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C. Use of Assessments and Data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D. Providing Instructional Feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E. Evaluating Current and New Programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
F. Observing and Evaluating Staff Performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## APPENDIX B

## INSTITUTION REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

## NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **12032904**

PROJECT TITLE: **The Effectiveness of a District-Wide Training Initiative on Determining Preparedness of Educational Leaders in a large, Southeastern Louisiana School System**

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation**

RESEARCHER/S: **Jeanne Wagner**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Leadership & School Counseling**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**

PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: **04/12/2012 to 04/11/2013**

**Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.**

**Institutional Review Board Chair**

APPENDIX C  
LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Superintendent Folse,

As a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, I am writing to request your permission to contact St. Tammany Parish administrators and invite them to participate in an anonymous, voluntary survey.

I am conducting a study into the effectiveness of district-wide initiatives in determining preparedness of educational leaders. Specifically, I will be asking administrators to report their perceived levels of preparedness in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction. The information obtained in the study may be beneficial in guiding training initiatives and professional development for both current and future district administrators.

The survey will require approximately 10 minutes of their time. Contact will be made via email and will consist of an introduction letter containing a link to access an electronic survey.

I appreciate your consideration and permission to conduct the survey. Should you have further questions, please contact me at (985) 373-3368 or by email [Jeanne.Wagner@stpsb.org](mailto:Jeanne.Wagner@stpsb.org).

Jeanne Wagner  
Doctoral Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi

## APPENDIX D

## INTRODUCTION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear St. Tammany Parish Administrator,

I am writing to request your participation in a voluntary, anonymous survey which seeks to investigate the effectiveness of district-wide training initiatives on determining preparedness of educational leaders within the school district. This study is being conducted in fulfillment of requirements of the doctoral program in the Department of Educational Leadership and School Counseling at The University of Southern Mississippi.

The electronic survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time and will explore perceived preparedness in the areas of school management, leading change, and curriculum and instruction. Your responses to the survey are vital to my research. You may discontinue participation in the study at any time, without penalty. All data will remain anonymous and will be reviewed by myself and committee members.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which assures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 394060001, (601) 2666820.

As a fellow administrator, I understand and appreciate how valuable your time is. I thank you in advance for your cooperation. Should you have further questions, please contact me by phone (985) 373-3368 or by email at [Jeanne.Wagner@stpsb.org](mailto:Jeanne.Wagner@stpsb.org).

To access the online survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/leadership-preparedness-survey>

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jeanne Wagner  
Doctoral Candidate, The University of Southern Mississippi

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